

HQ
1024
C47
S3
1948

Schmiedeler

Christian Marriage



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
LYRASIS members and Sloan Foundation

<http://archive.org/details/christianmarriag00schm>

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

An Analysis of and Commentary on the
Marriage Encyclical

Rev. Edgar Schmiedeler, O.S.B., Ph. D.

Sixth Edition 29,500

Printed in U. S. A.
February 4, 1948

National Catholic Conference on Family Life
1312 Massachusetts Ave., N. W.
Washington, D. C.

173.1
Sch 56

Nihil Obstat:

REV. T. E. DILLON

Censor Librorum

Imprimatur:

✠ JOHN FRANCIS NOLL, D. D.

Bishop of Fort Wayne

Published by
OUR SUNDAY VISITOR PRESS
Huntington, Indiana



14982-1
Cath. Conf. on family life. 25
10/22/51

This is one of a series of brochures published by the Catholic Conference on Family Life with the cooperation of OUR SUNDAY VISITOR PRESS. The series aims at providing a popular Catholic literature in the field of Marriage and the family. The individual booklets deal with topics selected from the wide reaches of parent education, the sociology of the family, and home economics. While the best findings of the natural sciences are made use of, every reasonable effort is made to keep the religious element uppermost in the series. The booklets should appeal not only to individual readers but also to study clubs, discussion groups and school classes.

7

Author's Introduction

During the past centuries of Christianity the attacks of the enemies of the Church have largely been leveled against the truths of faith. In other words, articles of the creed were denied. Today, as not a few Catholic writers are observing, their attacks are increasingly centered on moral truths. That is, the commandments of the decalogue are questioned and rejected. As the heresies of the past led to a high development of the Church's dogmatic teaching so those of the present will unquestionably lead to a more intensive development of ethical truth. As in the past, heresy in the field of faith led the Church authentically to define dogmas of faith, so today, heresy in the field of morals will undoubtedly lead her more definitely to state her position with regard to ethics or moral doctrine.

The encyclical on *Christian Marriage* is an important pronouncement in the field of morals. And it is a pronouncement that was entirely to be expected, since attacks on the moral code are today centering so largely on the family. An example in its pages of an almost dramatic expression of a moral doctrine is found in the words in which the Supreme Pontiff sets forth the Church's view regarding the artificial limitation of the family. "Since therefore," the encyclical reads, "openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew:

any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin."

In his encyclical Pius XI urges a correct knowledge of matrimony and a Catholic Action that will work toward a universal and permanent restoration of true Christian marriage. It was in the hope of contributing something toward the furtherance of these aims that the present brochure was prepared. Granted that the ideal would be for all to read and study the encyclical itself, the fact is that many complain that the text makes difficult reading, and have asked that its content be stated in a somewhat simplified form. This brochure is an attempt to supply such a simplified version. While practically the entire English text is quoted, it is nevertheless broken down into many parts. Furthermore it is interspersed with short analyses, brief comments, and occasional additional explanations and facts.

The encyclical on *Christian Marriage* was given to the world on the last day of the year 1930 and is known under the Latin title *Casti Connubii* (Of Chaste Wedlock). An encyclical on the same subject, promulgated by Pope Leo XIII on February 10, 1880, carries the Latin title, *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*. *Casti Connubii* falls logically into three major parts. The first sets forth in a positive way the Catholic position regarding marriage, the second deals with the errors and vices contrary to true marriage and the third with remedies or ways and means of restoring wedlock to its pristine dignity and purity. There is a short preface or exordium.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Christian Marriage

I. PREFACE OF THE ENCYCLICAL	9
Divine Authorship	9
Dignity of Marriage	10
The Part of the Human Will	11
II. THE NATURE AND BLESSINGS OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE	15
a. Offspring	15
The Procreation of Children	15
The Education of Children	17
b. Conjugal Faith	23
Unity	23
Chastity	24
Celibacy	24
Charity	25
Obedience	26
c. The Sacrament	29
Indissolubility of Marriage	29
Unconsummated Marriage and the Pauline Privilege	31
Matrimony, a Means of Grace	32
III. ERRORS AND VICES AGAINST CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE	36
General False Principle: Marriage Said to be a Human and not a Divine Institution.....	38
False Principles in Detail	39
a. Offspring	39
Birth Prevention	39
Infertile Periods	40
Abortion	42
Eugenic Fallacies	43

b.	Errors Against Conjugal Faith	55 ✓
	Against Marital Honor (and Unity)	55
	Against Marital Obedience	55
	Against Marital Love	57
c.	Errors Against the Sacrament	59
	Denial of Sanctity	59
	Mixed Marriages	60 ✓
	Denial of Indissolubility	62
	Separation	64
	Marriage Annulments	67
IV.	REMEDIES FOR THE EVILS AGAINST MARRIAGE....	69
	Return to the Divine Plan	69
	Subjection to God's Will	70
	Obedience to the Church	72
	Instruction on Marriage	74
	A Steadfast Will	75
	Preparation for Marriage	76
	Remote Preparation	76
	Choosing a Partner	77
	Families in Straitened Circumstances	81
	Preservation of the Moral Order	84

I

Preface

The Institution and Dignity of Christian Marriage

Divine Authorship. In taking up the question of the origination of matrimony, Pope Pius XI recalled first of all the encyclical on marriage written some fifty years earlier by his predecessor, Pope Leo XIII (*Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*) and stated that it had been "wholly concerned in vindicating the divine institution of matrimony, its sacramental dignity and its perpetual stability." Then he went on to emphasize in his own way the fundamental consideration that marriage is a divine and not a human institution. His words are:*

"Let it be repeated as an immutable and inviolable fundamental doctrine, that matrimony was not instituted or restored by man but by God; not by man were the laws made to strengthen and confirm and elevate it but by God, the Author of nature and by Christ Our Lord by whom nature was redeemed, and hence these laws cannot be subject to any human decrees or to any contrary pact even of the spouses themselves. This is the doctrine of Holy Scripture; this is the solemn definition of the sacred Council of Trent, which declares and establishes from the words of Holy Writ itself that God is the Author of the perpetual stability of the marriage bond, its unity and its firmness."

The meaning of the words is clear. In the eyes of the Church, marriage is God-made and not man-made. As a consequence it is subject to divine laws and not to

* All quotations not otherwise marked will be from the encyclical.

human laws. This is true even prescinding from the sacramental character of the marriage of baptized Christians. That is, marriage even as a Natural Law contract, is a divine institution, and not merely a civil and profane pact.

Insofar as the baptized are concerned, marriage is not only a divine institution. It is also a sacrament of the New Law. This fact, of course, in no way changes the Natural Law contract. It does, however, add something to it. It makes the matrimonial consent a grace-conferring institution. It supernaturalizes it.

Dignity of Marriage. From its divine authorship, its restoration by Christ and especially its sacramental character, flows the great dignity of marriage. This is pointed out in the very first sentence of the encyclical. "How great is the dignity of chaste wedlock," writes Pius XI, "may be judged best from this, that Christ Our Lord . . . not only . . . ordained it in an especial manner as the principle and foundation of domestic society and therefore of all human intercourse, but also raised it to the rank of a true and great sacrament of the New Law, restored it to the original purity of its divine institution, and accordingly entrusted all its discipline and care to His spouse, the Church."

The Part of the Human Will. While it is true that matrimony is of its very nature of divine origin, it is none the less true also that the human will enters into it and, as the encyclical states, "plays a most noble part therein." Each individual marriage arises only from the free consent of the spouses. Freedom of consent is of the very essence of the contract and the first condition for the validity of the sacrament. Indeed, so necessary is the free act of the will by which each party hands over and accepts the rights proper to the state of marriage, that it cannot be supplied by any human power, whether it be parental, civil, ecclesiastical, or other. It is for this reason that the Church has always guarded so jealously the freedom of consent of the contracting parties.

However, when once freely contracted, matrimony is subject not to the whims of man, but to its divinely made laws and its essential properties. Its nature, in other words, is entirely independent of the free will of man. Hence the encyclical concludes regarding the institution of matrimony: "The sacred partnership of true marriage is constituted both by the will of God and the will of man. From God comes the very institution of marriage, the ends for which it was instituted, the laws that govern it, the blessings that flow from it; while man, through generous surrender of his own person made to another for a whole span of life becomes, with the help and cooperation of God, the author of each particular marriage, with its duties and blessings annexed thereto from divine institution."

It should be of interest to note here that the Church had in the middle ages built a civilization based very largely on the same type of pledge that is made in marriage, that is, a civilization founded on the basic notion of a free choice of a fixed state. The religious vow, for instance, was such a pledge. Entering religious life, the individual made a solemn promise to God by which he voluntarily took upon himself the permanent obligation to practice chastity, poverty, and obedience. He entered religious life freely, but after he had entered he was not free to set aside the obligations he had so solemnly yet voluntarily taken upon himself. The vow of the knight of the time partook of much the same nature. Even in the position of the guildsman were found features very closely akin to those of the vow. Thus, the whole social atmosphere surrounding the tradesman's entrance into the guild was full of the sense of free personal decision. In other words, his entrance into a particular guild was altogether voluntary. But, once a member, he was bound to his guild group by strong ties. He found himself responsible for a very real loyalty and discipline. Such solemn pledges, therefore—feudal, marital, monastic—were common in the civilization of that day. Indeed, they

formed the basis of the civilization of the medieval centuries when the Church was so powerful in Europe. All tended to combine freedom and fixity or permanence in harmonious unison in the ideal of a vow voluntarily made. The result was a solid foundation and a reasonably satisfying and satisfactory society.

Before this, civilization was characterized, insofar as the masses were concerned, by status or slavery. This provided for fixity or stability in society, but there was neither honor nor freedom. After it came our present ramshackled system of contract, characterized indeed by liberty—unfortunately, a liberty which only too often amounted to license—but deficient in permanence or fixity. This latter system, that, namely, of a changeable, breakable contract, has in great part taken the place of the marriage vow, or former solemn pledge and sacred promise. The result has been most unfortunate, as seen, for instance, in the tremendous amount of divorce in the western world. Indeed, divorce, with all its evils has become a part and parcel of our civilization.

In the introductory part of the encyclical the Supreme Pontiff also briefly states the reason why he wrote the document, namely, because many in our time have totally rejected true Christian marriage, and because even some Catholics are found wanting with regard to it. As He states: "A great number of men, forgetful of that divine work of redemption, either entirely ignore or shamelessly deny the great sanctity of Christian wedlock, or, relying on the false principles of a new and utterly perverse morality, too often trample it under foot. And since these most pernicious errors and depraved morals have begun to spread even amongst the faithful and are gradually gaining ground, in Our office as Christ's Vicar upon earth and Supreme Shepherd and Teacher We consider it Our duty to raise Our voice to keep the flock committed to Our care from poisoned pastures and, as far as in Us lies, to preserve it from harm."

What is required in order that the desired fruits of

a renewal of matrimony may be obtained is also briefly indicated in the introductory section, namely: First, men's minds must be illuminated with the true doctrine of Christ regarding marriage; second, Christian spouses, the weakness of their wills strengthened by the internal grace of God, must "shape their ways of thinking and of acting in conformity with that pure law of Christ so as to obtain true peace and happiness for themselves and for their families."

Study Club Questions

1. What is the Latin title of the encyclical of Pius XI on Christian marriage?
2. What is the title of Leo XIII's encyclical on marriage? When was it issued?
3. On what facts is the true dignity of Christian marriage based?
4. What is meant by the divine authorship of marriage? What is meant by saying it is merely a human institution?
5. What part does the human will play in marriage?
6. Why did Pius XI write his encyclical?
7. What are the major divisions of the encyclical? Of what do the different parts treat?

II

The Nature and Blessings of Christian Marriage

In discussing the subject of the benefits, or what His Holiness calls the blessings of matrimony, Pius XI follows the treatment of the subject by St. Augustine. The latter discussed it under the major headings of offspring, conjugal faith, and the sacrament. "Under these three heads," Pius XI states, "is contained a splendid summary of the whole doctrine of Christian marriage."

OFFSPRING

It has always been the view of the Church that the prime purpose of marriage is the propagation of the human race, the begetting and rearing of children. The encyclical merely restates this when it says: "Amongst the blessings of marriage the child holds first place."

The Procreation of Children. God could have created the whole human race at one and the same time. In fact, He could have chosen an infinite variety of ways to propagate it. However, he actually elected one particular way; He chose to have human beings play a definite part in its propagation. By means of marriage was the human race to increase and multiply. Through the legitimate union of husband and wife were children to be born. Both God and man were to play a part in it. Marriage, therefore, cannot accomplish its highest purpose, the procreation of children, without the Almighty supplementing and completing the parental function by the creation of the child's soul. Hence even in its *natural* condition marriage oversteps the boundaries and limits of this world and its powers. It needs God in a special sense to complete it. It does not in itself have full and complete existence.

In order, however, really to appreciate how great a blessing of matrimony the begetting of children is, man's dignity and sublime end must be borne in mind. Made after the image and likeness of God, man was not only

created for this life but also for eternity. He is destined to know, love, and serve God forever. This truth the Holy Father recalls in the following words: "For man surpasses all other visible creatures by the superiority of his rational nature alone. Besides, God wishes men to be born not only that they should live and fill the earth, but much more that they may be worshippers of God, that they may know Him and love Him and finally enjoy Him forever in heaven; and this end, since man is raised by God in a marvelous way to the supernatural order, surpasses all that eye hath seen, and ear heard, and all that hath entered into the heart of man. From which it is easily seen how great a gift of divine goodness and how remarkable a fruit of marriage are children born by the omnipotent power of God through the co-operation of those bound in wedlock."

In conjunction with this sublime truth some special words are directed to Christian parents. In the first place the encyclical states that the latter must understand that "they are destined not only to propagate and preserve the human race on earth, indeed not only to educate any kind of worshippers of the true God, but children who are to become members of the Church of Christ, to raise up fellow-citizens of the Saints, and members of God's household that the worshippers of God and our Savior may daily increase." Then it goes on to say that Christian spouses even share in a measure in the blessings of the primeval marriage of Paradise, stating the reason for this in the following words: "Since it is theirs to offer their offspring to the Church in order that by this most fruitful Mother of the children of God they may be regenerated through the laver of Baptism into supernatural justice and finally be made living members of Christ, partakers of immortal life, and heirs of that eternal glory to which we all aspire from our inmost heart."

Finally, before passing on to the next specific point in the encyclical, the education or training of the chil-

dren, a few special words are directed toward mothers regarding childbearing, and towards both fathers and mothers regarding their attitude toward children. "If a true Christian mother," the encyclical states, "weigh well these things, she will indeed understand with a sense of deep consolation that of her the words of our Saviour were spoken: 'A woman . . . when she hath brought forth the child remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world'; and proving herself superior to all the pains and cares and solitudes of her maternal office with a more just and holy joy than that of the Roman matron, the mother of the Gracchi, she will rejoice in the Lord crowned as it were with the glory of her offspring. Both husband and wife, however, receiving these children with joy and gratitude from the hand of God, will regard them as a talent committed to their charge by God, not only to be employed for their own advantage or for that of any earthly commonwealth, but to be restored to God with interest on the day of reckoning."

The Education of Children. The blessing of offspring is not completed, the encyclical points out, by merely begetting them. They must also be trained. But they cannot train themselves. Indeed, they cannot provide for themselves in the natural order. Much less, therefore, can they do so in the supernatural order. They need help and guidance from others. And these others must primarily be the parents. As the encyclical states: "Now it is certain that both by the law of nature and of God this right and duty of educating their offspring belongs in the first place to those who began the work of nature by giving them birth, and they are indeed forbidden to leave unfinished this work and so expose it to certain ruin. But in matrimony provision has been made in the best possible way for this education of children that is so necessary, for since the parents are bound together by an indissoluble bond, the care and mutual help of each is at hand."

On this basis of the parents' duty to educate the child Pius XI condemns all promiscuous relations. That is, sex relations must be rigorously confined to the marriage state. "Nor must We omit to remark," He says, "that since the duty entrusted to parents for the good of their children is of such high dignity and of such great importance, every use of the faculty given by God for the procreation of new life is the right and the privilege of the marriage state alone, by the law of God and of nature, and must be confined absolutely within the sacred limits of that state."

At this point of the marriage encyclical attention is also called to what had already been stated in the encyclical on *The Christian Education of Youth* regarding parents' duty in the matter of child training. Two statements particularly may well be cited here. The first deals with the lack of training on the part of modern parents for their task of child training within the home. The second consists of an appeal to pastors to take the lead in fostering a parent education movement that will duly prepare parents for their duties. The words of the encyclical on these matters are forceful indeed. They read:

"We wish to call attention in a special manner to the present-day lamentable decline in family education. The offices and professions of a transitory and earthly life, which are certainly of far less importance, are prepared for by long and careful study; whereas for the fundamental duty and obligation of educating their children, many parents have little or no preparation, immersed as they are in temporal cares . . .

"For the love of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, therefore, We implore pastors of souls, by every means in their power, by instructions and catechisms, by word of mouth and written articles widely distributed, to warn Christian parents of their grave obligations. And this should be done not in a merely theoretical and general way, but with practical and specific application to the various responsibilities of parents touching the religious, moral and

civil training of their children, and with indication of the methods best adapted to make their training effective, supposing always the influence of their own exemplary lives."

That the parent is the educator *par excellence* has always been the Christian view of the matter. Indeed, from time immemorial has the home been recognized as the great educational agency, the school of schools. So it is not surprising that today, too, the home is, in the eyes of the Church, the prime educational institution and that the parent is the preceptor appointed by nature and nature's God. Referring in his encyclical on *The Christian Education of Youth* to the environment necessary for education, Pius XI states: "The first natural and necessary element in this environment . . . is the family, and this precisely because so ordained by the Creator Himself. Accordingly, that education, as a rule, will be more effective and lasting which is received in a well-ordered and disciplined Christian family." And further on he adds: "It is certain that both by the law of nature and of God this right and duty of educating their offspring belongs in the first place to those who began the work of nature by giving them birth, and they are indeed forbidden to leave unfinished this work and so expose it to ruin." The same doctrine is set forth in his encyclical on *Christian Marriage*, and in various other pronouncements which His Holiness has made from time to time. Indeed the Vicars of Christ, down through the centuries, have incessantly expressed the self-same view and urged parents to live up to what it implied.

A few words might be inserted here to indicate what has been done in the United States by Catholic groups regarding parent education since the words of Pius XI were written some eight years ago. Happily there is growing evidence of increasing interest on the part of Catholics in this important field of activity. Already during the twenties there were some who by means of public addresses were laying the foundations for what was

to follow. The reactions of the listeners at the time were varied and interesting. In some cases there was apathy; in others, undisguised resentment. Since when, apparently thought the latter, has the parental impulse become insufficient for the tasks of parenthood? Again, there were those who arched their eyebrows, and some who found it difficult to suppress a smile. But with the publication of the encyclical on *Education* there came a noticeable change. A decided impetus was given to the efforts of those who had been pioneering in this field. Catholic organizations, such as the National Catholic Educational Association and the National Conference of Catholic Charities, gave the subject some attention in their deliberations. The National Council of Catholic Women went a step further and appointed a special committee to study the subject. The Catholic Rural Life Conference showed some interest, and for several years had a special committee to give it attention.

In the case of all these organizations, however, the subject of parent education was but one of a host of other activities and interests, and in most instances an altogether secondary one. What was needed to promote the activity energetically and on a national scale, was a special purpose agency centering its efforts in this particular work. This was brought about by the establishment of the Family Life Bureau in the Social Action Department of the Bishops' official organization, the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Without neglecting other phases of family life, this agency, established in 1930, immediately centered special efforts in the promotion of a Catholic parent education movement: in other words, in the development of an intelligent interest on the part of Catholic parents in all phases of child care and training within the home. Its efforts in this field have been most ably seconded since 1933 by the Catholic Conference on Family Life, an auxiliary agency composed of leading Catholic students of family life throughout the country, which was organized by it that year.

Among the aims which the Family Conference set up for itself are the following: "The promotion of a Catholic parent education movement that will emphasize all the various phases of child training within the home—religious, social, physical, mental, emotional, and moral," and "the development and dissemination of a popular and an advanced literature on parent education." At its organization meeting the following resolution was drawn up on the subject and approved by its founders: "Deeply appreciating the wisdom and truth of the words of Pius XI in his encyclical on *Christian Education* that 'that education, as a rule, will be more effective and lasting which is received in a well-ordered and disciplined family,' and heartily deploring with His Holiness 'the lamentable decline in family education,' we, the members of the Catholic Conference on Family Life, condemn as a perversion of the natural order of things, modern efforts to make the merely supplementary educational agencies take the place of the home itself, and we pledge to make it one of the chief and most active interests of this Conference to foster a well-founded and thoroughly Catholic parent education program. We feel that one of the most salutary things that can be done for the family life of our day is for the individual parent to assume again, in truly Christian fashion, his full duties and obligations as the educator of the little ones whom God has entrusted to his care."

Both the Family Life Bureau and the Family Conference energetically set about carrying out the task assigned themselves. National and regional meetings were instituted. Lectures were given to many Catholic organizations. Popular booklets and study club outlines on various phases of parent education were published. Institutes were inaugurated. Courses were encouraged in schools. Study clubs were fostered. These and other efforts have been bearing very definite fruit.

A parent education program, to be truly adequate, must be all-embracing. It must extend to all the varied

phases of child care and training within the home. In other words, it must include the physical, the mental and moral, the emotional, the social and religious. This has been recognized by the aforementioned Catholic agencies, although herein as in all their activities, religion has been given special emphasis.

Study Club Questions

1. What is the prime purpose of marriage?
2. Whence comes the child's soul?
3. Why, particularly, is the begetting of children such a great blessing of matrimony?
4. In what sense can Christian spouses be said even to share in some measure in the blessings of the primeval marriage of paradise?
5. What special words does the encyclical direct to mothers regarding childbearing, and to both mothers and fathers regarding their attitude toward children?
6. Who were the Gracchi mentioned by Pius XI?
7. Who has the first right and duty regarding the education of children?
8. What does Pius XI say regarding the preparation of modern parents for their duties of child training? What is the nature of his appeal to pastors in this regard?
9. What is being done by the Family Life Bureau of the National Catholic Welfare Conference and by the Catholic Conference on Family Life to promote the work of parent education?

Conjugal Faith

Conjugal faith, or conjugal honor, as it is also called, is the second great blessing of matrimony named and considered by St. Augustine. The encyclical describes it as consisting in "the mutual fidelity of the spouses in fulfilling the marriage contract, so that what belongs to one of the parties by reason of this contract sanctioned by divine law, may not be denied to him or permitted to any third person; nor may there be conceded to one of the parties anything which, being contrary to the rights and laws of God and entirely opposed to matrimonial faith can never be conceded."

Four elements are distinguished in this particular blessing and treated at some length by Pius XI. They are the following: Unity, chastity, charity, obedience.

Unity. By unity is meant the fact that in the marriage state there is to be only one man and one woman, one husband and one wife. Such was the law laid down by the Creator in the beginning. Later on, it is true, this law was relaxed to some extent by God Himself, the Supreme Legislator. But under the full law of the Gospel the original and perfect unity of marriage was restored.

By this unity all such perversions as polygamy, polyandry, and promiscuity are absolutely banned. And not only is every dishonorable external act forbidden. Even "wilful thoughts and desires of such like things" are also prohibited. This is the evident meaning of the words of St. Matthew (V. 28): "Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."

It should be needless to add that where there is true unity of marriage there is in the eyes of the Church nothing unholy or unbecoming in the proper relations of husband and wife. Indeed, as already indicated, the sex life of the couple is God's chosen means through which they are to attain the primary purpose of marriage, the propagation of the race. Each supplies what is otherwise

lacking in order that a human being may be conceived and eventually born into the world. Furthermore, just as intercourse is licit between spouses, all that is naturally preparatory, concomitant and consequent on it is also licit.

It may be in place to add, however, that according to the teaching of the Church, the marital relation involves not only a question of right but also one of duty. In other words, the right of the married couple with regard to sex relations is a mutual right, and refusal of the right by one party is rightly looked upon by the other as a breach of contract and an injustice. This is the implication of the words of St. Paul (I Cor. vii, 3): "Let the husband render the debt to the wife, and the wife also in like manner to the husband." There are, of course, justifiable reasons for refusal at times—such, for instance, as: real jeopardy to the health or the life of one of the parties, infection with an active venereal disease, uncondoned adultery, intoxication, or too serious difficulties in the upbringing of children.

Chastity. The term "chastity" is used here in the encyclical in the sense of conjugal and not virginal chastity. It refers to the one check upon the mutual sex life of the husband and wife, namely, that it must not be spendthrift or unnatural. There must be no deliberate frustration of nature's plan. So long as this is the case, not only is their reciprocal love moral and upright; it is also the "work of God." They are sharers with the Deity in carrying out the divine plan for the furtherance of the human race. "If the blessing of conjugal faith is to shine with becoming splendor," says Pius XI, "that mutual familiar intercourse between the spouses themselves must be distinguished by chastity so that husband and wife bear themselves in all things within the law of God and of nature, and endeavor always to follow the will of their most wise and holy Creator with the greatest reverence toward the work of God."

Celibacy. A few words may be added here regarding

celibacy. From the earliest times voluntary virginity or celibacy was a distinctly Christian ideal and the Church has always considered the deliberate choice of a single state, from a supernatural motive, as spiritually very fruitful. In her eyes a life of perpetual virginity dedicated to God is a better life than is one of marriage. This is not because marriage is bad, or that it is merely a concession to human frailty, but because that which is lower in our nature is thereby more completely conquered by that which is higher, and because there can be among the unmarried closer union with God, since their hearts are less divided and their oblation more complete. The latter consideration is of the utmost importance since man has been created for a supernatural end and is destined to be transformed into the likeness of God.

With regard to life-long celibacy and pre-marital chastity, the moral law is the same: No wilful indulgence in lustful pleasure is permitted; nothing offensive to the virtue of purity, whether it be in thought, word, or deed, is allowed.

Charity. Another highly important element of conjugal faith is charity or love. There is question here of deep spiritual love as distinguished from passing sentiment and mere physical attraction. Quoting the words of St. Paul (Ephes. V. 25), "Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the Church," Pius XI states: "The love, then, of which We are speaking is not that based on the passing lust of the moment, nor does it consist in pleasing words only, but in the deep attachment of the heart which is expressed in action since love is proved by deeds." Furthermore, he points out that the primary purpose of this love is a spiritual one, namely, "that man and wife help each other day by day in forming and perfecting themselves in the interior life, so that through their partnership in life they may advance ever more and more in virtue, and above all that they may grow in true love towards God and their neighbor."

The ideal, therefore, that the marital pair should

both hold in view and strive after is that this merely human love become elevated and supernaturalized through divine love. Such a love is of the very essence of Christianity, and conjugal faith will indeed "bloom most beautifully and nobly" where it is found in a family circle.

Obedience. Under the title "honourable noble obedience," the marriage encyclical deals at some length with the subject of the respective positions of the husband and wife within the home. It argues that there must not only be love within the home, but also an "order of love." It reaffirms the traditional view of the Church that the husband and father is the head of the home and it points to the scriptural justification of the Church's stand on this matter, namely, the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians (v. 22-23): "Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is head of the Church." To make clearer, and more specific, however, the attitude of the Church regarding the position of the wife and mother in the home, Pius XI goes on to show more precisely what is implied, and what is not implied, in the so-called subjection (*obtemperatio*) of the wife.

It does not, he says, "deny or take away the liberty which fully belongs to the woman in view of her dignity as a human person, and in view of her noble office as wife and mother and companion; nor does it bid her obey her husband's every request if not in harmony with right reason or with the dignity due to a wife; nor, in fine, does it imply that the wife should be put on a level with those persons who in law are called minors, to whom it is not customary to allow free exercise of their rights on account of their lack of mature judgment, or of their ignorance of human affairs." However, it does forbid "that exaggerated liberty which cares not for the good of the family." In other words, it forbids "that in this body which is the family the heart be separated from the head to the great detriment of the whole body and the proximate danger of ruin. For if the man is the head,

the woman is the heart, and as he occupies the chief place in ruling so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love."

Still further light is thrown on the subject of the husband's primacy in the family by the following words of the encyclical: "Again, this subjection of wife to husband in its degree and manner may vary according to the different conditions of persons, place, and time. In fact, if the husband neglect his duty, it falls to the wife to take his place in directing the family. But the structure of the family and its fundamental law, established and confirmed by God, must always and everywhere be maintained intact."

Finally, before leaving this subject, Pius XI refers back to the words of Leo XIII's encyclical regarding it, quoting the following: "The man is the ruler of the family, and the head of the woman; but because she is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, let her be subject and obedient to the man, not as a servant but as a companion, so that nothing be lacking of honour or of dignity in the obedience which she pays. Let divine charity be the constant guide of their mutual relations, both in him who rules and in her who obeys, since each bears the image, the one of Christ, the other of the Church."

The foregoing, then, are the elements which constitute the blessings of conjugal faith: Unity, chastity, charity, honourable noble obedience. They are benefits which are bestowed upon husband and wife in their married state, "benefits by which the peace, the dignity and the happiness of matrimony are securely preserved and fostered." Little wonder, in view of them, that conjugal faith, as the encyclical states, "has been counted amongst the most priceless and special blessings of matrimony."

Study Club Questions

1. What is meant by the term "conjugal faith," as used in the encyclical?
2. What four main elements are distinguished in the blessing of conjugal faith?
3. What does the term "unity" imply with respect to marriage? What perverted types of marriage does it preclude?
4. Does the marital relation imply a duty as well as a right? For what reasons might the duty cease?
5. In what sense is the term "chastity" used in the Pope's discussion on conjugal faith?
6. What is the Church's view regarding celibacy or voluntary virginity?
7. What model for the love between husband and wife does Sacred Scripture suggest?
8. What should be the nature or primary purpose of the love of marital partners?
9. What ideal for the respective positions of husband and wife in the home does Holy Writ propose?
10. What, according to the encyclical, does the subjection of wife to husband not imply?

The Sacrament

The third blessing of Christian marriage is the sacrament. This, according to the encyclical, completes and crowns the benefits already enumerated. The term "sacrament" is here taken to mean two distinct things: The indissolubility of the marriage bond and the elevation of the matrimonial contract by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament or of an efficacious means of grace. In the case of the baptized, marriage is both an indissoluble union and a grace-conferring institution, that is, a sacrament in the full and technical sense of the term.

Indissolubility of Marriage. In every case, marriage is by nature indissoluble and inviolably stable. The scriptural bases that the encyclical refers to in substantiation of the latter statement are the texts respectively from Ss. Matthew and Luke: "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder" (Matt. XIX, 6); "Everyone that putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery, and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery" (Luke, XVI, 18).

By way of further clarification of this view of the Church regarding the indissolubility of marriage Pius XI quotes the following from a statement made by his predecessor, Pius VI, to the Bishop of Agria: "Hence it is clear that marriage even in the state of nature, and certainly long before it was raised to the dignity of a sacrament, was divinely instituted in such a way that it should carry with it a perpetual and indissoluble bond which cannot therefore be dissolved by any civil law. Therefore although the sacramental element may be absent from a marriage as is the case among unbelievers, still in such a marriage, inasmuch as it is a true marriage there must remain and indeed there does remain that perpetual bond which by divine right is so bound up with matrimony from its first institution that it is not subject to any civil power. And so, whatever marriage is said to be contracted, either it is so contracted that it is really

a true marriage, in which case it carries with it that enduring bond which by divine right is inherent in every true marriage; or it is thought to be contracted without that perpetual bond, and in that case there is no marriage, but an illicit union opposed of its very nature to the divine law, which therefore cannot be entered into or maintained."

Not content with calling attention to scriptural arguments for the indissolubility of the marriage tie Pius XI also sets forth, as it were by way of natural arguments, the benefits that normally flow from it. In doing so he distinguishes between the benefits that accrue to the married parties themselves, those that accrue to the offspring, and those that accrue to society. His words are: "First of all, both *husband and wife* possess a positive guarantee of the endurance of this stability which that generous yielding of their persons and the intimate fellowship of their hearts by their nature strongly require, since true love never falls away. Besides, a strong bulwark is set up in defense of a loyal chastity against incitements to infidelity, should any be encountered either from within or from without; any anxious fear lest in adversity or old age the other spouse would prove unfaithful is precluded and in its place there reigns a calm sense of security. Moreover, the dignity of both man and wife is maintained and mutual aid is most satisfactorily assured, while through the indissoluble bond, always enduring, the spouses are warned continuously that not for the sake of perishable things nor that they may serve their passions, but that they may procure one for the other high and lasting good have they entered into the nuptial partnership, to be dissolved only by death. In the *training and education of children*, which must extend over a period of many years, it plays a great part, since the grave and long enduring burdens of this office are best borne in the united efforts of the parents. Nor do lesser benefits *accrue to human society* as a whole. For experience has taught that unassailable stability in matrimony

is a fruitful source of virtuous life and of habits of integrity. Where this order of things obtains, the happiness and well being of the nation is safely guarded; what the families and individuals are, so also is the State, for a body is determined by its parts. Wherefore, both for the private good of husband, wife and children, as likewise for the public good of human society, they indeed deserve well who strenuously defend the inviolable stability of matrimony."

The indissolubility of marriage should also appear from the very nature of the contract. It is an essentially altruistic contract wherein the good of the race is given first place and the good of the individual is subordinated, having the nature of a means to an end. After all, it is only selfishness or individual difficulties that propose to dissolve the marriage contract. But a general law cannot disregard the nature of the ordinary case in order to make exceptions for the few who will possibly or certainly suffer because the law exists.

Unconsummated Marriage and the Pauline Privilege. In discussing the subject of indissolubility, the encyclical also refers to the Church's view with regard to unconsummated marriages and explains what is meant by the so-called Pauline Privilege. "And if this stability," it says, "seems to be open to exception, however rare the exception may be, as in the case of certain natural marriages between unbelievers, or amongst Christians in the case of those marriages which though valid have not been consummated, that exception does not depend on the will of men nor on that of any merely human power, but on divine law, of which the only guardian and interpreter is the Church of Christ."

Only consummated marriages, according to the mind of the Church, are indissoluble. She maintains that since only a marriage that has been duly celebrated and duly consummated by the procreative act is a fully and perfect marriage, a duly celebrated but unconsummated marriage may, granted certain conditions, be dissolved. Instances

of this kind are found today. They have been found also in the past.

Even in the case of a consummated marriage, provided it is a non-Christian marriage, there is a divinely ordained exception to indissolubility. It is known as the Pauline Privilege, and has as its basis the following words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she consent to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And if any woman hath a husband that believeth not, and he consent to dwell with her, let her not put away her husband . . . But if the unbeliever depart, let him depart; for a brother or sister is not under servitude in such cases." (I Cor. vii, 12, 13, 15).

The Church interprets these words as meaning that if a pagan partner demands of his wife (or husband) to lead a life of sin or to desert the Catholic religion, or if the pagan partner has gone off, then on the baptism of the party in question, the latter is privileged to marry again, and this second marriage by divine authority breaks off the bond of the first marriage. The laws of the Church require, however, that in such instances the party who is being converted makes what are known as the "interpellations," that is, the question must be asked of the pagan partner whether he (or she) will live together with the Catholic party peacefully and without hurt to his (or her) rights.

Matrimony, a Means of Grace. As already indicated, the term, "sacrament," as used by St. Augustine in treating of marriage, is used not only to imply firmness and indissolubility of the marriage tie, but also to indicate that it is a true sacrament of the New Law, an efficacious means of grace. Regarding the latter the encyclical states: "Christ the Lord, the Institutor and 'Perfecter' of the holy Sacraments, by raising the matrimony of His faithful to the dignity of a true Sacrament of the New Law, made it a sign and source of that peculiar internal

grace by which 'it perfects natural love, it confirms an indissoluble union, and sanctifies both man and wife.' "

Non-Catholics who think that the Catholic Church looks on all marriages, even of the baptized, outside of her fold, as not true marriages, might well read the words of the encyclical which immediately follow the foregoing quotation. The words are: "And since the valid matrimonial consent among the faithful is constituted by Christ as a sign of grace, the sacramental nature is so intimately bound up with Christian wedlock that there can be no true marriage between baptized persons 'without its being by that very fact a Sacrament.' " The obvious meaning of the words is that, quite contrary to their contention, the Catholic Church looks on the marriage of all validly baptized persons, inside or outside her fold, not only as true marriages, but as true sacraments.

As a sacrament of the new law, matrimony confers upon the soul that principle of supernatural life which is called sanctifying grace—a supernatural quality given by God to the soul for its sanctification and salvation. It also confers upon husband and wife special sacramental graces that help them in the fulfillment of their matrimonial duties. These truths are expressed in the following words of the encyclical: "They (the faithful) open up for themselves (through the sacrament) a treasure of sacramental grace from which they draw supernatural power for the fulfilling of their rights and duties faithfully, holily, perseveringly even unto death. Hence this Sacrament not only increases sanctifying grace, the permanent principle of the supernatural life, in those who, as the expression is, place no obstacle (obex) in its way, but also adds particular gifts, dispositions, seeds of grace, by elevating and perfecting the natural powers. By these gifts the parties are assisted not only in understanding, but in knowing intimately, in adhering to firmly, in willing effectively, and in successfully putting into practice those things which pertain to the marriage state, its aims and duties, giving them, in fine, right to the actual

assistance of grace, whensoever they need it for fulfilling the duties of their state."

Before leaving the subject of grace Pius XI points to the need of cooperation with it on the part of the faithful joined by marriage ties. He states in the encyclical: "Nevertheless, since it is a law of divine Providence in the supernatural order that men do not reap the full fruit of the Sacraments which they receive after acquiring the use of reason unless they co-operate with grace, the grace of matrimony will remain for the most part an unused talent hidden in the field unless the parties exercise these supernatural powers and cultivate and develop the seeds of grace they have received. If, however, doing all that lies within their power, they co-operate diligently, they will be able with ease to bear the burdens of their state and to fulfil their duties. By such a Sacrament they will be strengthened, sanctified, and in a manner consecrated."

Finally, regarding the subject of the sacrament Pius XI states: "These parties (the wedded pair), let it be noted, not fettered but adorned by the golden bond of the Sacrament, not hampered but assisted, should strive with all their might to the end that their wedlock, not only through the power and symbolism of the Sacrament, but also through their spirit and manner of life, may be and remain always the living image of that most fruitful union of Christ with the Church, which is to be venerated as the sacred token of most perfect love."

With this the Supreme Pontiff brings to a close the section of the encyclical that deals with the blessings of Christian marriage, or the extraordinary benefits of matrimony—offspring, conjugal faith, and the sacrament. "No one," he concludes, "can fail to admire the divine Wisdom, Holiness, and Goodness which, while respecting the dignity and happiness of husband and wife, has provided so bountifully for the conservation and propagation of the human race by a single, chaste, and sacred fellowship of nuptial union."

Study Club Questions

1. What two distinct features of Christian marriage are treated of under the title "The Sacrament"?
2. What scriptural texts are quoted to uphold the view of the Church regarding the indissolubility of marriage? What other arguments are advanced by the encyclical?
3. What is the view of the Church regarding unconsummated marriage in relation to the question of indissolubility?
4. What is the Pauline Privilege?
5. What is meant by matrimony as a means of grace?

III

Errors And Vices Against Christian Marriage

After having shown in a positive way, in the first part of the encyclical, the attitude of the Church toward marriage, Pius XI approaches the subject in a negative way. Step by step, he traverses in the second major section of the encyclical the same ground covered in the first, and points to the various errors and vices that stand opposed to the Church's doctrines on marriage and the family. First, attention is drawn to the general principle lying at the root of the errors and vices opposed to true Christian marriage, namely, the claim that it is not recognized as a divine institution, but that it was instituted by man. Then the following specific points are discussed: Birth prevention, abortion, eugenics, offenses against conjugal faith, denial of the sanctity of marriage, mixed marriages, divorce, and separation.

In introducing this particular part of the encyclical the Supreme Pontiff first of all points in a general way to the present degraded condition of the divine institution of marriage, a matter all the more regrettable because of the great intrinsic worth or excellence of chaste wedlock: "For now, alas!" he states, "not secretly under cover, but openly, with all sense of shame put aside, now by word, again by writings, by theatrical productions of every kind, by romantic fiction, by amorous and frivolous novels, by cinematographs portraying in vivid scene, in addresses broadcast by radio telephony, in short, by all the inventions of modern science, the sanctity of marriage is trampled upon and derided; divorce, adultery, all the basest vices either are extolled or at least are depicted in such colours as to appear to be free of all reproach and infamy. Books are not lacking which dare to pronounce themselves as scientific, but which in truth are merely coated with a veneer of science in order that they may the more easily insinuate their ideas. The doc-

trines defended in these are offered for sale as the productions of modern genius, of that genius namely, which, anxious only for truth, is considered to have emancipated itself from all those old-fashioned and immature opinions of the ancients; and to the number of these antiquated opinions they relegate the traditional doctrine of Christian marriage."

These thoughts, the Pontiff points out, are instilled into the minds of all, whether they be rich or poor, masters or workers, lettered or unlettered, married or single, godly or godless, old or young. Unfortunately, the worst snares are laid for the last-mentioned, the young. They are the easiest prey.

Some of the sponsors of these new doctrines are carried to the extremes of unbridled lust. Some, again, strive to follow a middle course, giving in at least in some measure to practices that are contrary to the divine and natural law. Both groups, according to the Pontiff, are "emissaries of the great enemy who is ever seeking to sow cockle among the wheat." Hence, bound by his most holy office to take care lest the good be choked by the weeds, he insists that both must be condemned, that their fallacies must be laid bare for the sake of the unwary,—"even though," he adds, "We prefer not to name these iniquities 'as becometh saints.'"

It might well be recalled at this point that the Church does not maintain that the observance of the moral law is easy. The fact, however, that its observance is difficult does not set aside its binding force. No matter what the clamor of a soft and undisciplined generation may be for the relaxation of any moral law, the Church can only say as she has ever said in substance in the past: "It cannot be done (*non possumus*). No command of the decalogue can be relaxed. Nothing in the field of faith or morals can be set aside. Not one jot or tittle can be sacrificed. God has given such power neither to his Church nor to any other institution."

General False Principle

The false principle in general, advanced by the advocates of those who offend against the true doctrines of Christian marriage is, as already indicated, the following: Marriage is a human, and not a divine institution. Or, to use the words of the encyclical: "To begin at the very source of these evils, their basic principle is this, that matrimony is repeatedly declared to be not instituted by the author of nature nor raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a true Sacrament, but invented by man." In refutation of this erroneous view Pius XI refers the reader to his teaching in the first part of the encyclical regarding the origin and nature of wedlock, and regarding its purposes and the good inherent in it. Then he points to the evils which flow from this false principle, evils which can readily be inferred from the consequences which its advocates deduce from it, namely, "that the laws, institutions and customs by which wedlock is governed, since they take their origin solely from the will of man, are subject entirely to him, hence can and must be founded, changed and abrogated according to human caprice and the shifting circumstances of human affairs; that the generative power which is grounded in nature itself is more sacred and has wider range than matrimony—hence it may be exercised both inside as well as outside the confines of wedlock." On the basis of such views, the encyclical points out, some have gone so far as even to concoct new species of union—so-called "temporary," "experimental" and "companionate" marriages. These "offer all the indulgence of matrimony and its rights without, however, the indissoluble bond and without offspring unless later the parties alter their cohabitation into a matrimony in the full sense of the law." Some have even sought to have legitimized by the law these "hateful abominations which beyond all question reduce our truly cultured nations to the barbarous standards of a savage people." All such are to be condemned.

FALSE PRINCIPLES IN DETAIL

After having discussed the foregoing general principle Pius XI proceeds in his encyclical to enumerate and refute, one by one, the various evils, the errors and vices opposed to the three blessings of matrimony—offspring, conjugal faith, and the sacrament. Under the first, namely, offspring, the following specific evils are considered: Birth prevention, abortion, and a faulty eugenics.

OFFSPRING

Birth Prevention. Referring to the fact that some have the boldness to call offspring the “disagreeable burden of matrimony,” and to say that children are to be avoided by married people, not through virtuous continence—which is permissible when both parties consent—but through the frustration of the marriage act, the supreme Pontiff states unequivocally that, “no reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good.” And he immediately adds: “Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.” These words succinctly express the attitude of the Church with regard to birth prevention in the sense of the artificial limitation of the family. Artificial birth control, or the frustration of the marriage act, is unnatural, morally wrong, intrinsically vicious. No purpose or circumstance can justify it.

To be sure, there is nothing new about this view. It is but the age-old doctrine of the Church stated over again. The “Fathers,” or early writers of the Church, definitely reprobated birth control. The Popes have time and again condemned it. The Roman Congregations, whose duty it is to answer vexing points of moral practice, have never in their many answers done anything but

condemn it. The encyclical but repeats the self-same doctrine.

Infertile Periods. Some stupidly (and, perhaps, some maliciously) argue today that if contraception—the artificial limitation of the family—is wrong, then the use of the marriage right during infertile periods is also unequivocally wrong. To the unbiased, however, the fundamental difference between these two methods of controlling births is readily apparent. The former involves a deliberate frustration of nature, the latter does not. The sterile place no barriers in the way. They do nothing to make impossible the natural results of nature's processes and nature's plan. In other words, they do not frustrate nature. To be sure, the prime purpose of marriage still is to propagate and conserve the race. Certainly that cannot be set aside, even though there be other or secondary purposes too. In other words there must be real reasons for the use of even natural birth control.

On this score the encyclical states: "Nor are those considered as acting against nature who in the married state use their state in the proper manner, although on account of natural reasons either of time or of certain defects, new life cannot be brought forth. For in matrimony as well as in the use of the matrimonial rights there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider so long as they are subordinated to the primary end and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved."

Before categorically condemning all artificial birth control, because intrinsically against nature, the Supreme Shepherd refers to some of the reasons by which certain individuals have sought to justify this vicious practice. "Some," he states, "justify this criminal abuse on the ground that they are weary of children and wish to gratify their desires without their consequent burden. Others say that they cannot on the one hand remain continent

nor on the other can they have children because of the difficulties whether on the part of the mother or on the part of family circumstances." One and all without exception are condemned. However, while simply passing up without further ado what His Holiness calls "the arguments which are shameful," that is the arguments of those who merely seek to gratify their passions without accepting the burdens of childbearing, Pius XI makes special reference to those who argue in favor of artificial birth control because of difficulties that exist at times on the part of the mother or on the part of family circumstances. Thus, he refers with true fatherly concern to the risk and hardship endured by the mother and the sufferings endured by the very poor. At the same time, however, he warns lest any be led into evil ways because of these difficulties. "Holy Mother Church," he says, "very well understands and clearly appreciates all that is said regarding the health of the mother and the danger to her life. And who would not grieve to think of these things? Who is not filled with the greatest admiration when he sees a mother risking her life with heroic fortitude, that she may preserve the life of the offspring which she has conceived? God alone, all bountiful and all merciful as He is, can reward her for the fulfillment of the office allotted to her by nature, and will assuredly repay her in a measure full to overflowing . . .

"We are deeply touched by the sufferings of those parents who, in extreme want, experience great difficulty in rearing their children.

"However, they should take care lest the calamitous state of their external affairs should be the occasion for a much more calamitous error. No difficulty can arise that justifies the putting aside of the law of God which forbids all acts intrinsically evil. There is no possible circumstance in which husband and wife cannot, strengthened by the grace of God, fulfill faithfully their duties and preserve in wedlock their chastity unspotted."

In conjunction with the subject of birth control the

encyclical points out that the practice may involve guilt only in the case of one of the parties. "Holy Church knows well," it states, "that not infrequently one of the parties is sinned against rather than sinning, when for a grave cause he or she reluctantly allows the perversion of the right order." Catholic moralists interpret the words as follows: a spouse who would suffer grave inconvenience through refusal is permitted to consent reluctantly to what is known as onamistic intercourse. They do not, however, admit the lawfulness of acquiescence on the part of the one when a mechanical contraceptive is used by the other, apart from most exceptional cases, such as the threat of death; and even in that case the spouse may not consent to the pleasure of the act. In all instances protest must be made against such conduct.

Abortion. That Pius XI should refer in this encyclical to abortion—that is, the taking of the life of the unborn child—as a "very grave crime," will cause no surprise. Abortion, no matter what the reason for which it is advocated, is simply a violation of the precept of God and of the law of nature, "thou shalt not kill." It is cold-blooded murder.

The reasons for abortion that are often advanced are much the same as those advanced by some in favor of birth prevention, namely: *medical*, notably the precarious condition of the mother's health, *social*, or the want of income sufficient to support another child, and *eugenic*, or the fact that the parents are of a diseased or degenerate stock.

Referring to the first of these reasons, the "medical or therapeutic indication," as it is called, Pius XI states: "However much we may pity the mother whose health and even life is gravely imperilled in the performance of the duty allotted to her by nature, nevertheless what could ever be a sufficient reason for excusing in any way the direct murder of the innocent? This is precisely what we are dealing with here. Whether inflicted upon the mother

or upon the child, it is against the precept of God and the law of nature: 'Thou shalt not kill.' The life of each is equally sacred and no one has the power, not even the public authority, to destroy it."

Regarding the social and eugenic "indications" the encyclical adds: "To wish to put forward reasons based upon them for the killing of the innocent is unthinkable and contrary to the divine precept promulgated in the words of the apostle: Evil is not to be done that good may come of it."

The Supreme Pontiff not only condemns the heinous crime of abortion, but also insists on the principle that it is the duty of the public authority, by appropriate laws and efficacious sanctions, to protect the lives of the innocent. Such, he points out, is particularly the case when those whose lives are endangered cannot defend themselves, "among whom," he says, "we must mention in the first place infants hidden in the mother's womb." As a matter of fact, abortion does fall under the penal laws of the States in this country.* However, the laws are but poorly enforced and the crime has become commonplace. Some wish even the weakly-administered laws to be set aside in certain cases. In fact, some ask forthright that "the public authorities provide aid for these death-dealing operations." Against all such, Pius XI insists the State has a clear duty. His closing vigorous words on the subject are: "And if the public magistrates not only do not defend them, but by their laws and ordinances betray them to death at the hands of doctors or of others, let them remember that God is the Judge and Avenger of Innocent blood which cries from earth to Heaven."

Eugenic Fallacies. The third error that the encyclical discussess under the blessings of offspring, is a faulty eugenics. Two distinct things are given attention, the prevention of marriage on the part of certain individ-

*Excepting Therapeutic abortion. This, too, however, is morally wrong.

uals, and sterilization. The following are the words of the encyclical regarding both.

"Finally, that pernicious practice must be condemned which closely touches upon the natural right of man to enter matrimony, but affects also in a real way the welfare of the offspring. For there are some who, oversolicitous for the cause of eugenics, not only give salutary counsel for more certainly procuring the strength and health of the future child—which, indeed, is not contrary to right reason—but put eugenics before aims of a higher order, and by public authority wish to *prevent from marrying* all those who, even though naturally fit for marriage, they consider, according to the norms and conjectures of their investigations, would, through hereditary transmission, bring forth defective offspring. And more, they wish to legislate to *deprive those of that natural faculty by medical action* despite their unwillingness; and this they do not propose as an infliction of grave punishment under the authority of the State for a crime committed, nor to prevent future crimes by guilty persons, but against every right and good they wish the civil authority to arrogate to itself a power over a faculty which it never had and can never legitimately possess.

"Those who act in this way are at fault in losing sight of the fact that the family is more sacred than the State, and that men are begotten not for the earth and for time, but for Heaven and eternity. Although often these individuals are to be dissuaded from entering into matrimony, certainly it is wrong to brand men with the stigma of crime because they contract marriage, on the ground that, despite the fact that they are in every respect capable of matrimony, they will give birth only to defective children, even though they use all care and diligence.

"Public magistrates have no direct power over the bodies of their subjects; therefore, where no crime has taken place and there is no cause present for grave punishment, they can never directly *harm, or tamper with,*

the integrity of the body, either for the reasons of eugenics or for any other reason. St. Thomas teaches this when, inquiring whether human judges for the sake of preventing future evils can inflict punishment, he admits that the power indeed exists as regards certain other forms of evils, but justly and properly denies it as regards the maiming of the body. 'No one who is guiltless may be punished by a human tribunal either by flogging to death, or mutilation, or by beating.'

"Furthermore, Christian doctrine establishes, and the light of human reasons makes it most clear, that private individuals have no other power over the members of their bodies than that which pertains to their natural ends; and they are not free to destroy or mutilate their members, or in any other way render themselves unfit for their natural function, except when no other provision can be made for the good of the whole body."

At least five fundamental principles are laid down in the foregoing brief paragraphs of the encyclical. They are: (1) Man has a natural right to enter matrimony; (2) The "natural faculty" must not be destroyed for anything except crime; (3) The family is more sacred than the State; (4) It is not a crime to enter marriage even if defective children only will be born of the union; (5) Public authority has no direct power even over the bodies of its subjects.

To marry is one of the most fundamental of the natural rights of man. Hence, according to the mind of the Church, the State has no right to prevent from marrying those who are naturally fit for marriage—those, in other words, who give reasonable promise of being able to carry out the functions of married life. The notion, for instance, that such motives as saving expense or bettering the race are sufficient justification for the State to deny the individual the use of such a fundamental right as marriage is a highly pernicious one. It might readily lead not only to excessive paternalism but also to intoler-

able tyranny. It is to be remembered that the State exists for the good of the citizen and not, vice versa, the citizen for the good of the State. The body politic does not originate the individual's natural rights. It finds them in his possession and exists to protect them and to further their legitimate use. It has no right to disregard them or to play fast and loose with them.

By the same token is sterilization forbidden. To sterilize an individual is to deprive him of the proper use of a natural faculty, the procreative faculty. It is to deny him the inherent right to propagate his kind. The State has no blanket right to do such a thing. To repeat the clear statement of the encyclical on this point: "Public magistrates have no direct power over the bodies of their subjects; therefore, where no crime has taken place and there is no cause present for grave punishment, they can never directly harm, or tamper with, the integrity of the body, either for the reason of eugenics or for any other reason."

Nor is the individual himself free to submit to sterilization. Man has not full dominion over his body. He is, as it were, the Creator's administrator, God reserving for Himself both life and integrity, except for certain recognized exceptions such as capital punishment and the amputation of a member for the good of the whole body. Hence the pronouncement of the encyclical: "Christian doctrine establishes, and the light of reason makes it most clear, that private individuals have no other power over the members of their bodies than that which pertains to their natural ends; and they are not free to render themselves unfit for their natural functions, except when no other provision can be made for the good of the whole body."

The last clause of the foregoing quotation refers to a legitimate operation. To say, therefore, that sterilization—that is, the deliberate removal or amputation of an organ necessary for procreation, for the purpose of pre-

venting procreation—is wrong, is not to maintain that the removal of a diseased procreative organ, for the purpose of preventing disease, is wrong. The removal of such a diseased organ is not properly called sterilization. It is not more properly called that than it is to speak of the amputation of a diseased member of the body as mutilation.

The subject of eugenics is much to the fore today and some further reference to it, particularly aiming at the application of the principles enunciated in the encyclical, should be of interest.

What the eugenicist has in view is race betterment, that is, a physically and mentally better stock. That the Church is not inimical to such a cause goes without saying. That she has done much down through the centuries that has made for race betterment, and is still doing much today, is no less true. The Church encourages some of the means advocated by modern eugenicists. Others she disapproves. As the encyclical points out, she condemns the materialistic and paternalistic views of those who would "put eugenics before the aims of a higher order."

Among the methods of improving the race advocated by the modern eugenicist are, besides the two already indicated: Sex instruction; eugenical examination; sufficient income to make possible early marriage; segregation of certain defectives. Properly understood, the Church sees some good in all of these. There are, however, certain interpretations or applications to which the Church objects.

Insofar as sex instruction to children and adults is concerned, the Church approves provided it is given discreetly, that is, in a graded and a guarded way.

With regard to eugenical examinations it can be said that the Church also generally approves. These are given in order to emphasize the importance of good health and to enable one contracting party to know the physical condition of the other. On this particular subject the Rt. Rev. John M. Cooper poses, and then answers, the follow-

ing two questions: (1) Has a man or woman the right to demand a physical examination of the prospective mate before marriage?; (2) What is the attitude of the Catholic Church toward such a demand and toward State laws obliging prospective mates or at least the man to pass a physical examination before marriage? The answers follow in his own words:

"While the Church has given no official pronouncement on the subject, we are quite justified in drawing our practical conclusions from well-recognized Catholic principles. Such a physical examination does not appear to contravene any basic human right. On the other hand, so far as it goes, it may help toward the better protection of mates and offspring. A number of our states require either a sworn statement or else a physical examination testifying that the applicant or applicants for the marriage license are free from venereal disease. There are, however, so many ways of evading these laws and the laws themselves are often so loosely administered that not much has been accomplished by them, except in an educational way.

"There is, however, no reason why the prospective husband and wife should not on their own initiative give or, if need be, ask the other party to give medical evidence of freedom from venereal or other grave incapacitating diseases. Speaking from the religious standpoint, most Catholics who are interested in the matter would cordially agree and fervently hope that such an interchange of medical testimonials before marriage should be recognized as a matter of course. And in the present state of public opinion on the matter, if the girl from ignorance or from other causes fails to take this perfectly sensible precaution, and the man in the case fails to offer such certification on his own initiative, her father or mother kindly should look after the matter for her,—the physical examination to be made ordinarily by a physician of the father's choosing who is competent. A fiance who would resent such a request or take it amiss is, in this day,

just a plain fool,—or else a knave. The proper thing is to volunteer a health certificate, without waiting to be asked.”*

It should be well to note in passing that the encyclical nowhere indicates that the question of responsibility regarding actual entrance into marriage on the part of parties of tainted stock or limited means, or of responsibility regarding the begetting of children on the part of married people of tainted stock or limited means is to be decided by any other tribunal than that of the conscience of the parties concerned themselves.

It should hardly be necessary to state that the Church heartily approves of sufficient means of support to enable the physically and mentally fit to marry at a reasonably early age and rear a normal family. So, too, does the Church approve of arousing public opinion in favor of marriage on the part of healthy men and women in order that the number of good marriages and the number of healthy offspring be increased. However, she objects to the total elimination of celibacy among the fit. As indicated later on, the Church maintains that the example given by the voluntary vow of celibacy is an important factor in race culture.

The legitimacy of “dissuading” degenerates or unfit individuals from marrying is clearly indicated in the encyclical. Arousing and guiding public opinion so as to frown upon the marriage of degenerates, and thereby decreasing the number of unpromising marriages, would seem in harmony with this. Father Slater states on this score: “The moral theologian discourages the marriage of the unfit. If a man is incapable of looking after and providing for a family he should not marry. If he does marry he undertakes obligations which he cannot fulfill. Disease or crime detected in one of the parties to a promise of marriage gives to the other party the right to break off the engagement. People laboring under infectious diseases are to be dissuaded from marrying while they are

*Religion Outlines for Colleges, Course IV, 1st Ed., pp. 74-76.

in that state. Such persons are not absolutely prohibited from marrying one who knows of the disease, and who is willing to take the risks. The Church has allowed lepers to marry. Danger to souls would be the consequence of enforced celibacy. After all we must guard against not only bodily disease but the far more terrible diseases of the soul." (Thomas J. Slater, *A Manual of Moral Theology*).

Segregation of certain degenerates, or their detention in colonies or institutions, also meets with the Church's approval. This should benefit society both by separating the degenerates themselves from it and by eliminating their potential degenerate offspring. Father Thomas J. Gerrard refers to this in the following words: "Although the spirit of the ecclesiastical legislation stands for individual freedom against the tendency of the state to curtail it, we cannot deny the competence of the latter to safeguard the welfare of the community by the segregation of those members who are a real and serious danger. Only the danger must be real and serious." (*The Church and Eugenics*).

An example in point is that of the work done at Rome State School in the State of New York. The method of dealing with the mental defectives in the colonies established there is to give them intelligent treatment and proper training so that all who are innately capable of eventually returning to society and marrying may be adequately prepared to do so. The others must remain permanently separated from society. In such colonies the sexes are segregated.

Laws against anti-eugenic forces such as indecent publications and the white slave traffic should prove helpful. In fact, duly enforced, such laws can be one of the most effective ways of lessening public immorality and its many anti-eugenic consequences. It can cause no surprise then that the Church most readily sanctions them.

It goes without saying that such measures as di-

voice, promiscuity, and birth control, proposed by some as eugenic measures, are clearly condemned by the Church's teaching.

Regarding the fact mentioned, that the Church looks with disfavor on the *materialistic trend* of those modern eugenists who ignore religion as a means of improving the human race, the following words of the Catholic Encyclopedia are to the point: "The root difference between Catholic teaching and that of modern eugenics is that the one places the final end of man in eternal life, whilst the other places it in civic worth. The effectual difference is that the Church makes bodily and mental culture subservient to morality, whilst modern eugenics makes morality subservient to bodily and mental culture." Most eugenists of a materialistic turn of mind entirely ignore religion as a factor in race culture while the Church looks upon religion as the most powerful eugenic factor of all. Referring to this particular point Father Thomas Slater, S. J., states: "Not only are degenerates as capable as the most robust and healthy of attaining the true end of human existence, but in many respects they are more fitted to obtain it. The calendar of Christian Saints would be much shorter, nay, it would be robbed of some of its most glorious names, if all degenerates were removed from it."

A consideration that must not be overlooked is the important one that the Church has herself always taken, and still takes today, an active part in working for the betterment of the human race. For example, there are the Church's marriage laws which in a variety of ways work toward the prevention of the marriage of the unfit. And there are still other ways. The following words of Rev. Thomas J. Gerrard at least briefly indicate some of these, together with their effects: "She (the Church) provides for proper selection in marriage by setting impediments against unworthy marriages. The spirit life of the married pair and of the children is protected by the prohibition of mixed marriages. The proclamation

of banns protects the parties against possible fraud or mistake. The requirement of consent of parents tends to promote prudent marriages. The impediment of a previous engagement unreleased is a safeguard against rash promises and heartless breach of promise. The impediments of consanguinity and affinity are universally acknowledged to have a great eugenic value. Moreover, since the most necessary and most difficult eugenic reforms consist in the control of the sex appetite, the practice of celibacy is an important factor in race culture. It is the standing example of a divinely aided will holding the sensual passion in check."

Again, as Father Gerrard indicates, in dealing with racial poisons, the Church provides most radical remedies. "Against alcohol," he says, "she sets the virtue of temperance, against white lead the virtue of justice, against venereal disease the virtue of purity."*

So, too, does the Church look to essential needs of the child. Particularly does she do this by her attitude toward parent education or her insistence on the proper training of children by their parents, and by her adamant stand on the unity or indissolubility of marriage, matters which mean so much to the proper training of the child.

Nor must the influence of the Church in promoting race culture through the maintenance of the spiritual life and general morality be overlooked. This She does by such means as the sacraments and prayer, by her teaching and exhortation, and by other ways of fostering a virtuous life—such, for example, as asceticism and celibacy. Regarding the last-mentioned, it should be observed that bodily discipline is both a means of fostering virtue and of maintaining bodily health, and that the good example of the celibate may stimulate the virtue of purity outside marriage and the virtue of chastity

*Working with white lead easily becomes destructive of good health. For instance, a poison gets into the blood, not infrequently with bad results to the heart.

within marriage. Since the most necessary and most difficult eugenic reforms consist in the control of the sex instinct, the practice of celibacy is an important factor in race culture, being the standing example of a divinely aided will holding sensual passion in check.

In general, it is safe to say the methods which the Church sanctions are actually conducive to human welfare. They provide for the betterment of life, health, home, and marriage—four elements of human welfare. On the other hand the methods which the Church condemns are destructive of human welfare. They produce more harm than good by endangering general morality and by unjustly infringing upon the rights of individuals. The methods which the Church herself proposes and applies are most conducive to racial betterment. Since sin is the ultimate source of many, or even most racial evils, religion, which safeguards morality, is after all the most powerful eugenic factor.

Study Club Questions

1. What is the general principle lying at the root of the vices and errors against Christian marriage?
2. What evil results have followed from the acceptance of this false principle?
3. What modern means, according to the encyclical, are being made use of to spread false teachings regarding marriage?
4. What two groups of sponsors of these new but false doctrines does Pius XI distinguish and what does he say of both of them?
5. What does the Holy Father say of artificial birth control? Is the view he expresses a new one?
6. On what bases do certain individuals seek to justify artificial birth control? What does Pope Pius XI say about the various arguments which they advance in favor of this vicious practice?
7. Why is abortion a "very grave crime?" How does Pius XI answer the various arguments that are advanced in favor of it?
8. What two distinct eugenic fallacies are considered in the encyclical?
9. What are the fundamental principles indicated in the encyclical's statement on eugenics?
10. What is sterilization and why is it wrong?
11. What are some of the chief means for improving the human race advocated by modern eugenicists? What is the Church's view regarding each?
12. Does the encyclical forbid dissuading degenerate individuals from marrying?
13. Does segregation of certain unfit individuals meet with the Church's approval?
14. By what means has the Church promoted race betterment?

Errors Against Conjugal Faith

Another group of errors given mention in the marriage encyclical are those that imply a violation of the blessing of matrimony known as conjugal faith. In taking up a discussion of these, Pope Pius first of all points out that "every sin committed as regards the offspring becomes in some way a sin against conjugal faith, since both these blessings are essentially connected." Then he proceeds to discuss the specific sources of error and vice which correspond to the virtues which are demanded by conjugal faith, namely, "the *chaste honor* existing between man and wife, the *due subjection* of wife to husband, and the *true love* which binds both parties together."

Offenses Against Chaste Honor. Those spouses offend against chaste honor or marital fidelity, and at the same time against marital unity, who in any way countenance a harmful and false friendship toward a third party. Such are condemned, in the words of Pius XI, "by that noble instinct which is found in every chaste husband and wife, and even by the light of the testimony of nature alone—a testimony that is sanctioned and confirmed by the command of God: 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' (Exod. xx, 14); and the words of Christ: 'Who-soever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart' (Matt. v, 28)." And the Pontiff adds: "The force of this divine precept can never be weakened by any merely human custom, bad example or precept of human progress, for just as it is the one and the same 'Jesus Christ, yesterday and today and the same forever,' so it is the one and the same doctrine of Christ that abides and of which not one jot or tittle shall pass away till all is fulfilled."

Against Marital Obedience. Those offend against marital obedience, or the due subjection of wife to husband, who set aside the honorable and trusting obedience which the woman owes to the man. In discussing this

subject the Supreme Pontiff mentions and defines the following three faulty types of emancipation of women: "*Physiological*, that is to say, the woman is to be freed at her own good pleasure from the burdensome duties properly belonging to a wife as companion and mother; *social*, inasmuch as the wife being freed from the cares of children and family should, to the neglect of these, be able to follow her own bent and devote herself to business and even public affairs; *economic*, whereby the woman even without knowledge and against the wish of her husband may be at liberty to conduct and administer her own affairs, giving her attention chiefly to these rather than to children, husband and family." Such emancipation, Pius XI adds, is not true emancipation. It is not that true and exalted liberty which belongs to the noble office of a Christian woman and wife. Rather is it "the debasing of the womanly character and the dignity of motherhood, and indeed of the whole family, as a result of which the husband suffers loss of his wife, the children of their mother, and the home and the whole family of an ever watchful guardian."

More than this, Pius XI points out, the woman herself will suffer from such a faulty emancipation. "This false liberty and unnatural equality with the husband," He says, "is to the detriment of the woman herself, for if the woman descends from her truly regal throne to which she has been raised within the walls of the home by means of the Gospel, she will soon be reduced to the old state of slavery (if not in appearance, certainly in reality) and become as amongst the pagan the mere instrument of man."

Finally, the Supreme Shepherd points out, in conjunction with the subject of woman's position, that there are certain highly important equal rights that must by all means be safeguarded and that there are in our day certain changed conditions that call for a readaptation of the civil rights of the wife on the part of the State. On these two points the words of the encyclical read:

"This equality of rights which is so much exaggerated and distorted, must indeed be recognized in those rights which belong to the dignity of the human soul, and which are proper to the marriage contract and inseparably bound up with wedlock. In such things undoubtedly both parties enjoy the same rights and are bound by the same obligations; in other things there must be a certain inequality and due accommodation, which is demanded by the good of the family, and the right ordering and unity and stability of home life.

"As, however, the social and economic conditions of the married woman must in some way be altered on account of the changes in social intercourse, it is part of the office of the public authority to adapt the civil rights of the wife to modern needs and requirements, keeping in view what the natural disposition and temperament of the female sex, good morality, and the welfare of the family demand, and provided always that the essential order of the domestic society remain intact, founded as it is on something higher than human authority and wisdom, namely, on the authority and wisdom of God, and so not changeable by public laws or at the pleasure of private individuals."

Against Marital Love. There are, thirdly, those who violate conjugal faith by offending against *true love*. Here, according to the encyclical, we find the ones who would substitute for that true and solid love, which is the basis of conjugal happiness, "passing sentiment or mere love of the senses." According to them, the only bond by which husband and wife are linked together is "sympathy" or "a certain vague compatibility of temperament." And when that ceases the marriage is to be dissolved. Such a procedure would indeed be, as the encyclical points out, to build a house upon sand; while what is really needed is a house built upon a rock, that is, a house built upon rational love or affection, upon a capacity for self-sacrifice both for each other's welfare and for that of the children. Only such a house can

stand. Only such love will neither fall away nor be shaken by adversity.

In this connection one cannot help but think of the exaggerated romanticism that has developed in our day, hand in hand with the pleasure philosophy, and of such unsound and freakish theories as "love at first sight" and "the soul mate" that have grown up with it.

Study Club Questions

1. When do spouses offend against chaste honor and marital unity?
2. What three faulty types of emancipation of women does Pius XI define?
3. What are the highly important equal rights of women which, according to the encyclical, must be studiously safeguarded?
4. What is the nature of the faulty love that Pius XI condemns?

Errors Against The Sacrament

In introducing the subject of the errors against the third blessing of matrimony, namely, the sacrament, Pius XI points out that this particular blessing, because of its intrinsic excellence, is much more sharply attacked than the other two blessings. He then enumerates in the following words the ways in which its enemies offend against it: "They put forward in the first place that matrimony belongs entirely to the profane and purely civil sphere, that it is not to be committed to the religious society, the Church of Christ, but to civil society alone. They then add that the marriage contract is to be freed from any indissoluble bond, and that separation and divorce are not only to be tolerated but sanctioned by the law; from which it follows finally that, robbed of all its holiness, matrimony should be enumerated amongst the secular and civil institutions. The first point is contained in their contention that the civil act itself should stand for the marriage contract (civil matrimony, as it is called), while the religious act is to be considered a mere addition, or at most a concession to a too superstitious people. Moreover, they want it to be no cause for reproach that marriages be contracted by Catholics with non-Catholics without any reference to religion or recourse to the ecclesiastical authorities. The second point, which is but a consequence of the first, is to be found in their excuse for complete divorce and in their praise and encouragement of those civil laws which favour the loosening of the bond itself."

The two major considerations to which the Supreme Pontiff then turns his attention are the question of the religious character or sanctity of marriage and that of its indissolubility. In considering the first His Holiness refers at some length to mixed marriages. Under the second, a few words regarding the Church's teaching on separation are added.

Denial of Sanctity. In answer to those who deny

the sanctity of marriage, that is, those who maintain that matrimony is a purely profane and not a religious institution, Pius XI first of all refers the reader to the marriage encyclical of Leo XIII which treated at length and supported with weighty arguments the salient features of the religious character of all marriages and particularly of the sacramental union of Christians. Then he repeats a few of the points in the following words: "Even by the light of reason alone and particularly if the ancient records of history are investigated, if the unwavering popular conscience is interrogated and the manners and institutions of all races examined, it is sufficiently obvious that there is a certain sacredness and religious character attaching even to the purely natural union of man and woman, 'not something added by chance but innate, not imposed by men but involved in the nature of things,' since it has 'God for its author and has been even from the beginning a foreshadowing of the Incarnation of the Word of God.' This sacredness of marriage which is intimately connected with religion and all that is holy, arises from the divine origin we have just mentioned, from its purpose, which is the begetting and educating of children for God, and the binding of man and wife to God through Christian love and mutual support; and finally, it arises from the very nature of wedlock, whose institution is to be sought for in the far-seeing Providence of God, whereby it is the means of transmitting life, thus making the parents the ministers, as it were, of the Divine Omnipotence. To this must be added that new element of dignity which comes from the sacrament, by which the Christian marriage is so ennobled and raised to such a level, that it appeared to the Apostle as a great sacrament, honourable in every way."

Mixed Marriages. It is because of the profound religious character of Christian marriage, and all that this implies that the Church objects to so-called "mixed marriages." She has always set her face against these

marriages, that is, against unions between Catholics and non-Catholics. The occasional dispensations she grants for such unions are given with reluctance and only then upon the following conditions: The non-Catholic must promise to allow the children to be baptized and to be brought up as Catholics; he (or she) must promise not to interfere with the religious practices of the Catholic party; the marriage ceremony must be performed by a Catholic priest.

The Church takes the attitude that Catholics who contract mixed marriages fail conspicuously in the respect and reverence that should be accorded matrimony because of its sacramental character. She also deplors the religious indifference and even defections from religion which not infrequently result from these unions. Furthermore, she notes that they are a threat to the firmness of the marriage bond. The words of the encyclical on this point are:

"This religious character of marriage, its sublime signification of grace and the union between Christ and the Church, evidently requires that those about to marry should show a holy reverence towards it, and zealously endeavor to make their marriage approach as nearly as possible to the archetype of Christ and the Church.

✓"They, therefore, who rashly and heedlessly contract mixed marriages, from which the maternal love and providence of the Church dissuades her children for very sound reasons, fail conspicuously in this respect, sometimes with danger to their eternal salvation. This attitude of the Church to mixed marriages appears in many of her documents, all of which are summed up in the Code of Canon Law: 'Everywhere and with the greatest strictness the Church forbids marriages, between baptized persons, one of whom is a Catholic and the other a member of a schismatical or heretical sect; and if there is, added to this, the danger of the falling away of the Catholic party and the perversion of the children, such a marriage is forbidden also by the divine law.' If the

Church occasionally, on account of circumstances, does not refuse to grant a dispensation from these strict laws (provided that the divine law remains intact and the dangers above mentioned are provided against by suitable safeguards), it is unlikely that the Catholic party will not suffer some detriment from such a marriage.

"Whence it comes about not unfrequently, as experience shows, that deplorable defections from religion occur among the offsprings, or at least a headlong descent into that religious indifference which is closely allied to impiety. There is this also to be considered that in these mixed marriages it becomes much more difficult to imitate by a lively conformity of spirit the mystery of which We have spoken, namely, that close union between Christ and His Church.

"Assuredly, also, will there be wanting that close union of spirit which, as it is the sign and mark of the Church of Christ, so also should be the sign of Christian wedlock, its glory and adornment. For, where there exists diversity of mind, truth, and feeling, the bond of union of mind and heart is wont to be broken, or at least weakened. From this comes the danger lest the love of man and wife grow cold and the peace and happiness of family life, resting as it does on the union of hearts, be destroyed. Many centuries ago, indeed, the old Roman law had proclaimed: 'Marriages are the union of male and female, a sharing of life and the communication of divine and human rights.'"

Denial of Indissolubility. With regard to the permanence of the marriage tie the attitude of the enemies of the sacrament is clear. The bond, they insist, is dissoluble. The right to divorce must be recognized. And, not only must the dissolution of the marriage bond be permitted, it must also be sanctioned by law. Some even go further and say that, "marriage, being a private contract, is, like other private contracts, to be left to the consent and good pleasure of both parties, and so can be dissolved for any reason whatsoever."

Although Pius XI had already in an earlier part of his encyclical stated the Church's view regarding the indissolubility of marriage, even giving reasons for the Church's position regarding it, he again returns to the subject here, arguing at considerable length against those who would uphold dissoluble marriage or divorce. He first of all states the grounds upon which the latter base their contentions and the arguments by which they strive to prove them, and then he refutes them. The following are the words of the encyclical regarding both: "Many and varied are the grounds put forward for divorce, some arising from the wickedness and guilt of the persons concerned, others arising from the circumstances of the case; the former they describe as subjective, the latter as objective; in a word, whatever might make married life hard or unpleasant. They strive to prove their contentions regarding these grounds for the divorce legislation they would bring about, by various arguments. Thus, in the first place, they maintain that it is for the good of either party that the one who is innocent should have the right to separate from the guilty, or that the guilty should be withdrawn from a union which is displeasing to him and against his will. In the second place, they argue, the good of the child demands this, for either it will be deprived of a proper education or the natural fruits of it, and will too easily be affected by the discords and shortcomings of the parents, and drawn from the path of virtue. And, thirdly, the common good of society requires that these marriages should be completely dissolved, which are now incapable of producing their natural results, and that legal separations should be allowed when crimes are to be feared as the result of the common habitation and intercourse of the parties. This last, they say, must be admitted to avoid the crimes being committed purposely with a view to obtaining the desired sentence of divorce for which the judge can legally loose the marriage bond, as also to prevent people from coming before the courts when it

is obvious from the state of the case that they are lying and perjuring themselves—all of which brings the court and the lawful authority into contempt. Hence the civil laws, in their opinion, have to be reformed to meet these new requirements, to suit the changes of the times and the changes in men's opinions, civil institutions, and customs. Each of these reasons is considered by them as conclusive, so that all taken together offer a clear proof of the necessity of granting divorce in certain cases."

In answer to those who thus argue for legalized divorce, or who even claim the right of divorce at the mere good pleasure of both parties, Pius XI categorically states: "Opposed to all these reckless opinions, Venerable Brethren, stands the unalterable law of God, a law that can never be deprived of its force by the decrees of men, the ideas of a people or the will of any legislator; 'What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.' And if any man, acting contrary to this law, shall have put asunder, his action is null and void, and the consequence remains, as Christ Himself has explicitly confirmed: 'Everyone that putteth away his wife and marieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.' Moreover, these words refer to every kind of marriage, even that which is natural and legitimate only; for, as has already been observed, that indissolubility by which the loosening of the bond is once and for all removed from the whim of the parties and from every secular power is a property of every true marriage." Then, quoting the Council of Trent to the effect that, "according to the teaching of the Gospels and the Apostles, the bond of marriage cannot be loosed because of the sin of adultery of either party," the Supreme Pontiff adds that if such is the case, "it is evident that all the other weaker excuses that can be, and are usually brought forward, are of no value whatever."

Separation. At this point Pius XI refers to the Church's doctrine regarding separation or permission for

husband and wife to live apart under certain circumstances. He recalls it here by way of an answer to the objections brought against the firmness of the marriage bond. His words, as recorded in the encyclical are: "And the objections brought against the firmness of the marriage bond are easily answered. For, in certain circumstances imperfect separation of the parties is allowed, the bond not being severed. This separation, which the Church herself permits, and expressly mentions in her Canon Law in those canons which deal with the separation of the parties as to marital relationship and cohabitation, removes all the alleged inconveniences and dangers. It will be for the sacred law and, to some extent also, the civil law, in so far as civil matters are affected, to lay down the grounds, the conditions, the methods and precautions to be taken in a case of this kind in order to safeguard the education of the children and the well-being of the family, and to remove all those evils which threaten the married persons, the children, and the State." Needless to add, since there is no dissolution of the marriage bond, there is also no question of remarriage.

Before concluding the subject of divorce, Pius XI once more refers to words of Leo XIII's encyclical on marriage. He states:

"To revert again to the expressions of Our predecessor, it is hardly necessary to point out what an amount of good is involved in the absolute indissolubility of wedlock and what a train of evils follows upon divorce. Whenever the marriage bond remains intact, then we find marriages contracted with a sense of safety and security, while, when separations are considered and the dangers of divorce are present, the marriage contract itself becomes insecure, or at least gives ground for anxiety and surprises. On the one hand we see a wonderful strengthening of goodwill and co-operation in the daily life of husband and wife, while, on the other, both of these are miserably weakened by the presence of a facility

for divorce. Here we have at a very opportune moment a source of help by which both parties are enabled to preserve their purity and loyalty; there we find harmful inducements to unfaithfulness. On this side we find the birth of children and their tuition and unbringing effectively promoted, many avenues of discord closed amongst families and relations, and the beginnings of rivalry and jealousy easily suppressed; on that, very great obstacles to the birth and rearing of children and their education, and many occasions of quarrels, and seeds of jealousy sown everywhere. Finally, but especially, the dignity and position of women in civil and domestic society is reinstated by the former; while by the latter it is shamefully lowered and the danger incurred 'of their being considered outcasts, slaves of the lust of men.'

"To conclude with the important words of Leo XIII, 'since the destruction of family life and the loss of national wealth is brought about more by the corruption of morals than by anything else, it is easily seen that divorce, which is born of the perverted morals of a people, and leads, as experiment shows, to vicious habits in public and private life, is particularly opposed to the well-being of the family and of the State. The serious nature of these evils will be the more clearly recognized when we remember that, once divorce has been allowed, there will be no sufficient means of keeping it in check within any definite bounds. Great is the force of example, greater still that of lust; and with such incitements it cannot but happen that divorce and its consequent setting loose of the passions should spread daily and attack the souls of many like a contagious disease or a river bursting its banks and flooding the land.'

"Thus, as we read in the same letter, 'unless things change, the human family and State have every reason to fear lest they should suffer absolute ruin.' All this was written fifty years ago, yet it is confirmed by the daily increasing corruption of morals and the unheard of

degradation of the family in those lands where Communism reigns unchecked."

That Pope Leo XIII's words, predicting a mounting tide of divorce, have been most strikingly fulfilled in the United States is seen from statistical studies and estimates that are at hand. The tide has risen constantly except for a few years during the depression. Thus, in 1887 there were in the United States 27,919 divorces; in 1900, 55,751; in 1915, 104,298; in 1929, 201,468. Since 1939 the number of divorces year by year has been as follows:*

1939	251,000
1940	264,000
1941	293,000
1942	321,000
1943	359,000
1944	400,000
1945	494,000
1946	613,000

Marriage Annulments. Perhaps a word might be added here about marriage annulments, since they are so often misunderstood in this country. An annulment means an official declaration by the Church that a certain alleged marriage was null and void from the beginning. Among the reasons for which a marriage may be declared null or invalid are the following: A diriment impediment was discovered *after* the marriage; the consent was faulty; the proper "form" was not used. Respect and reverence for the dignity of the sacrament demand that instances, or alleged instances, of invalid marriages be formally investigated and that decisions be given by competent and learned authority. It is for the adjudication of these and similar matters that the Church maintains her Ecclesiastical Courts.

*Includes reported annulments.

Study Club Questions

1. In what ways do the enemies of marriage offend against its third blessing, the sacrament?
2. What two major considerations does Pius XI discuss under the sacrament?
3. How does the Supreme Pontiff argue the sanctity of marriage?
4. Why does the Church object to mixed marriages?
5. What promises must the non-Catholic party make in the case of a dispensation for a mixed marriage?
6. What do the enemies of marriage maintain regarding its indissolubility?
7. How does the Supreme Shepherd refute the arguments of those who uphold the dissolubility of marriage or divorce?
8. What is the teaching of the Church regarding separation of husband and wife?
9. What is an annulment?

IV

Remedies For The Evils Against Marriage

Having treated in the first part of his encyclical of the nature and dignity of human marriage and in the second part of its frustration and abuse by the passions, errors, and vices of men, the Supreme Pontiff turns in the third part to a consideration of suitable remedies for the present deplorable condition in which marriage finds itself. "It is then fitting," he says, "that, with all fatherly solicitude, We should turn Our mind to seek out suitable remedies whereby those most detestable abuses, which we have mentioned, may be removed and everywhere marriage may again be revealed."

RETURN TO THE DIVINE PLAN

In accordance with the foregoing statement His Holiness then proceeds to lay down the general principle that when things have deviated from their right order, as he has shown them to have done in our day with regard to human wedlock, they cannot be brought back to the original state which is in harmony with their nature except by a return to the divine plan. "To this end," Pius XI says, "it behooves Us, above all else, to call to mind that firmly established principle, esteemed alike in sound philosophy and sacred theology: namely, that whatever things have deviated from their right order, cannot be brought back to that original state which is in harmony with their nature, except by a return to the divine plan, which, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, is the exemplar of all right order." Then he quotes the following words of Leo XIII by which he had attacked the Naturalists in his day: "It is a divinely appointed law that whatsoever things are constituted by God, the Author of nature, these we find the more useful and salutary, the more they remained in their natural state, unimpaired and unchanged; inasmuch as God, the Creator of all things, intimately knows what is suited to the

constitution and the preservation of each, and by His will and mind has so ordained all things that each may duly achieve its purpose. But if the boldness and wickedness of men change and disturb this order of things, so providentially disposed, then, indeed, things so wonderfully ordained will begin to be injurious, or will cease to be beneficial, either because in the change they have lost their power to benefit, or because God Himself is thus pleased to draw down chastisement on the pride and presumption of men."

The return to the divine plan, or the restoration of due order in the matter of marriage, that Pius XI speaks of, requires both knowledge of the plan and a life that is in conformity with it. More specifically, it requires subjection to God's will, obedience to the Church, instruction on marriage, and determination or a steadfast will. These things, in turn, depend in no small measure on due preparation for marriage, both remote and proximate. The State, too, can play a part by insisting on a family wage, by certain kinds of social legislation, and by harmonious relationship with the Church. It is to these considerations that the Pope turns his attention in the last section of the encyclical.

Subjection to God's Will. Stating that "to restore due order in this matter of marriage, it is necessary that all should bear in mind what is the divine plan and strive to conform to it," the Supreme Pontiff points out that, because of the power of unbridled lust a most fundamental requirement is subjection to God's will. This, he insists, must be the primary endeavor of the individual if the sacred laws of matrimony are to be observed. The reason for this would seem quite obvious to the Catholic. As the encyclical states it: "It is a sacred ordinance that whoever shall have first subjected himself to God, will with the aid of divine grace, be glad to subject to himself his own passions and concupiscences; while he who is a rebel against God, will to his sorrow, experience

within himself the violent rebellion of his worst passions."

There is no doubt that the chief obstacle to the unprejudiced study and wholehearted acceptance of the plan divinely ordained with regard to marriage is the power of unbridled lust, and man cannot check his passions unless he shows an humble compliance to duty, a reverence toward his Maker, in other words, unless he subjects himself to God. Without such subjection, all the study of the family and of related science will not avail. Without the supernatural the abuses of marriage will not be remedied. Without religion and the aid of grace the family will not be restored to its original plan. "They are greatly deceived," says His Holiness, "who, having underestimated or neglected these means which rise above nature, think that they can induce men, by the use and discovery of the natural sciences such as those of biology, the science of heredity, and the like, to curb their carnal desires. We do not say this in order to belittle those natural means which are not dishonest; for God is the author of nature as well as of grace, and He has disposed the good things of both orders for the beneficial use of them. The faithful, therefore, can and ought to be assisted also by natural means. But they are mistaken who think that these means are able to establish chastity in the nuptial union, or that they are more effective than supernatural grace."

While making the most, therefore, of the natural sciences that relate to family life, the fact must constantly be kept uppermost that the supernatural is necessary, that the sacraments are necessary, that the aid of grace is necessary, that subjection to God's will is necessary. Hence, referring to pastors of souls, Pius XI adds: "Quite fittingly, therefore, and quite in accordance with the defined norm of Christian sentiment, do those pastors of souls act who, to prevent married people from failing in the observance of God's law, urge them to perform their duty and exercise their religion so that they

should give themselves to God, continually ask for His divine assistance, frequent the sacraments, and always nourish and preserve a loyal and thoroughly sincere devotion to God."

Obedience to the Church. Besides subjection to God's will, obedience to the Church is necessary if there is to be an effective restoration of the divine plan with regard to marriage. Such a restoration requires that the divine laws of marriage be known with certainty and without any accompanying error. In other words, conformity to these laws demands clear and definite knowledge of them. This implies obedience to the Church, the God-appointed interpreter of the moral law. It is no secret that the private judgment of the individual is easily overrated in the field of morals. Man's passions readily distort his judgment and confuse his reason. If left to the individual, the interpretation of the moral law is only too likely to be in his favor. Error can so easily creep in. This is true of the moral law generally. It is all the more so when a particularly inordinate appetite or violent passion clamors for satisfaction.

These truths are set forth at some lengths in the following lines taken from the encyclical:

"This conformity of wedlock and moral conduct with the divine laws respective of marriage, without which its effective restoration cannot be brought about, supposes, however, that all can discern readily with real certainty, and without any accompanying error, what those laws are. But everyone can see to how many fallacies an avenue would be opened up and how many errors would become mixed with the truth, if it were left solely to the light of reason of each to find it out, or if it were to be discovered by the private interpretation of the truth which is revealed. And if this is applicable to many other truths of the moral order, we must all the more pay attention to those things which appertain to marriage where the inordinate desire for pleasure can attack frail human nature and easily deceive it and lead

it astray; this is all the more true of the observance of the divine law, which demands sometimes hard and repeated sacrifice, for which, as experience points out, a weak man can find so many excuses for avoiding the fulfillment of the divine law.

"On this account, in order that no falsification or corruption of the divine law but a true genuine knowledge of it may enlighten the minds of men and guide their conduct, it is necessary that a filial and humble obedience towards the Church should be combined with devotedness to God and the desire of submitting to Him. For Christ Himself made the Church the teacher of truth in those things also which concern the right regulation of moral conduct, even though some knowledge of the same is not beyond human reason. For just as God, in the case of the natural truth of religion and morals, added revelation to the light of reason, so that what is right and true, 'in the present state also of the human race may be known readily with real certainty without any admixture of error,' so for the same purpose He has constituted the Church the guardian and the teacher of the whole of the truth concerning religion and moral conduct; to her, therefore, should the faithful show obedience and subject their minds and hearts so as to be kept unharmed and free from error and moral corruption; and so that they shall not deprive themselves of that assistance given by God with such liberal bounty, they ought to show this due obedience not only when the Church defines something with solemn judgment, but also in proper proportion, when by the constitutions and decrees of the Holy See, opinions are prescribed and condemned as dangerous or distorted.

"Wherefore, let the faithful also be on their guard against the overrated independence of private judgment and that false autonomy of human reason. For it is quite foreign to everyone bearing the name of a Christian to trust his own mental powers with such pride as to agree only with those things which he can examine from their

inner nature, and to imagine that the Church, sent by God to teach and guide all nations, is not conversant with present affairs and circumstances; or even that they must obey only in those matters which she has decreed by solemn definition as though her other decisions might be presumed to be false or putting forward insufficient motive for truth and honesty. Quite to the contrary, a characteristic of all true followers of Christ, lettered or unlettered, is to suffer themselves to be guided and led in all things that touch upon faith or morals by the Holy Church of God through its Supreme Pastor the Roman Pontiff, who is himself guided by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Instruction on Marriage. Not only must the individual be prepared to accept the teaching of the Church on marriage, he must also know clearly what that teaching is. He must be well instructed with regard to Christian wedlock. "In order to bring about the universal and permanent restoration of marriage," Pius XI states, "it is indeed of the utmost importance that the faithful should be well instructed concerning matrimony." Such instruction, he urges, should be given "both by word of mouth and by the written word, not cursorily, but often and fully, by means of plain and weighty arguments, so that these truths will strike the intellect and will be deeply engraved on their hearts." Then, addressing himself to the bishops, the priests, and the laity welded together in Catholic Action, His Holiness says that if the latterday subverters of marriage "by means of books and pamphlets and other innumerable methods," mislead the minds of men and corrupt their hearts, they should themselves "by every fitting means oppose error by truth, vice by the excellent dignity of chastity, the slavery of covetousness by the liberty of the sons of God." And he adds: "Such wholesome instruction and religious training in regard to Christian marriage will be quite different from that exaggerated physiological education," advocated by some reformers, "by which is learned rather the art of

sinning in a subtle way than the virtue of living chastely."

Here is indeed a field for Catholic Action in behalf of the family—learning and making known to others the truths of the Church regarding Christian marriage!

A Steadfast Will. But knowledge alone is insufficient for the restoration of marriage. Instruction—"even the very best instruction given by the Church," as the encyclical states—will not in itself bring about conformity of marriage to the law of God. Something more is necessary. A steadfast will is necessary. As the encyclical points out, there is need on the part of husband and wife for a steadfast determination of the will to observe the sacred laws of God and of nature in regard to marriage. "Let husband and wife resolve" it states, "to stand fast to the commandments of God in all things that matrimony demands; always to render to each other the assistance of mutual love; to preserve the honor of chastity; not to lay profane hands on the stable nature of the bond; to use the rights given them by marriage in a way that will be always Christian and sacred, more especially in the first years of wedlock, so that should there be need of continency afterwards, custom will have made it easier for each to preserve it."

In order to help husbands and wives attain to such a steadfast will or to live up to their determined resolution, Pius XI suggests that they often consider the duties of their state of life, and that they diligently reflect on the sacrament they have received. "Let them constantly keep in mind," he says, "that they have been sanctified and strengthened for the duties and for the dignity of their state by a special sacrament, the efficacious power of which, although it does not impress a character, is undying."

Here again, then, the Supreme Pontiff refers to the supernatural, to grace. But he insists that co-operation with the grace of the sacrament on the part of the married parties is necessary. This he states in the follow-

ing words: "Yet in order that the grace of this sacrament may produce its full fruit, there is need, as we have already pointed out, of the co-operation of the married parties; which consists in their striving to fulfill their duties to the best of their ability and with unwearied effort. For just as in the natural order men must apply the powers given them by God with their own toil and diligence that these may exercise their full vigor, failing which, no profit is gained, so also men must diligently and unceasingly use the powers given them by the grace which is laid upon the soul by this sacrament. Let not, then, those who are joined in matrimony neglect the grace of the sacrament which is in them; for, in applying themselves to the careful observance, however laborious, of their duties they will find the power of that grace becoming more effectual as time goes on."

PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

Pius XI gives special attention to the question of preparation for marriage, both remote and proximate. Indeed, he states that all the things considered in the foregoing depend in large measure on the due preparation of the parties for marriage.

Remote Preparation. Speaking of the remote preparation His Holiness states: "For it cannot be denied that the basis of a happy wedlock, and the ruin of an unhappy one, is prepared and set in the souls of boys and girls during the period of childhood and adolescence. There is danger that those who before marriage sought in all things what is theirs, who indulged even their impure desires, will be in the married state what they were before, that they will reap that which they have sown; indeed, within the home there will be sadness, lamentation, mutual contempt, strifes, estrangements, weariness of common life, and worst of all, such parties will find themselves left alone with their own unconquered passions."

The religious note is again much in evidence in the words which immediately follow the foregoing. Inci-

dently they also draw, in a few bold strokes, the outlines of an ideal Christian home. They state: "Let, then, those who are about to enter on married life approach that state well disposed and well prepared, so that they will be able as far as they can to help each other in sustaining the vicissitudes of life, and yet more in attending to their eternal salvation and in forming the inner man unto the fulness of the age of Christ. It will also help them, if they behave towards their cherished offspring as God wills: that is, that the father be truly a father, and the mother truly a mother; through their devout love and unwearying care, the home, though it suffer the want and hardship of this valley of tears, may become for the children, in its own way, a foretaste of that paradise of delight in which the Creator placed the first men of the human race. Thus will they be able to bring up their children as perfect men and perfect Christians; they will instil into them a sound understanding of the Catholic Church, and will give them such a disposition and love for their fatherland as duty and gratitude demand."

Next, addressing himself to "both those who are now thinking of entering upon this sacred marriage state, as well as those who have the charge of educating Christian youth," the Supreme Pontiff calls to their attention the following lines from his encyclical on *The Christian Education of Youth*: "The inclinations of the will, if they are bad, must be repressed from childhood, but such as are good must be fostered, and the mind, particularly of children, should be imbued with doctrines which begin with God, while the heart should be strengthened with the aids of divine grace in the absence of which, no one can curb evil desires, nor can his discipline and formation be brought to complete perfection by the Church, for Christ has provided her with heavenly doctrines and divine Sacraments, that He might make her an effectual teacher of men."

Choosing a Partner. An important part of the proximate preparation of a good married life consists in the

careful selection of a life partner. "On that," says the encyclical, "depends a great deal whether the forthcoming marriage will be happy or not, since one may be to the other either a great help in leading a Christian life, or a great danger and hindrance."

Several specific recommendations are then made in this regard, namely, careful deliberation, diligent prayer, and consultation with parents. In mentioning these the encyclical adds in each case a few words of explanation, or one or more reasons for the recommendation. The text reads: "And so that they may not deplore for the rest of their lives the sorrows arising from an indiscreet marriage, those about to enter into wedlock should carefully deliberate in choosing the person with whom henceforward they must live continually; they should, in so deliberating, keep before their minds the thought first of God and of the true religion of Christ, then of themselves, of their partner, of the children to come, as also of human and civil society, for which wedlock is a fountain head. Let them diligently pray for divine help, so that they make their choice in accordance with Christian prudence, not indeed led by the blind and unrestrained impulse of lust, nor by any desire of riches or other base influences, but by a true and noble love and by a sincere affection for the future partner; and then let them strive in their married life for those ends for which the state was constituted by God. Lastly, let them not omit to ask the prudent advice of their parents with regard to the partner, and let them regard this advice in no light manner in order that by their mature knowledge and experience of human affairs they may guard against a disastrous choice, and on the threshold of matrimony may receive more abundantly the divine blessing of the fourth commandment: 'Honour thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with thee and thou mayest be longlived upon the earth.'"

There is no question that there is need for emphasiz-

ing all these points in our modern life. Some sociologists claim that one of the chief causes of our marriage problem today is mismating or failure to make a discreet choice in selecting a life partner.*

*The author of this brochure has two chapters dealing with this subject in his *Introductory Study of the Family*. They are chapters XIV and XV, entitled respectively, "Pre-marital Preparation" and "Choice of a Marriage Partner." They are mentioned here for the benefit of readers who may wish to go further into the subject. An introductory paragraph states: "In the problem of the modern family, as in all social problems, emphasis must first of all be placed upon preventive work and constructive measures. To wait until a family has become totally disrupted and then to try to rebuild it, is to attempt a big task and frequently, a hopeless one. Some effective remedial work may be done, particularly in the case of but partially disorganized families. Yet in this, as in all other fields of social work, curative work alone is quite unsatisfactory and even disappointing. The logical starting point, therefore, for any program that seeks to reintegrate the disintegrated modern family is pre-marital preparation, a sincere effort, in the first instance, to build strong families, to establish wholesome and well-organized homes."

Study Club Questions

1. The observance of what fundamental principle is necessary for the restoration of marriage?
2. What, specifically, does a return to the divine plan regarding marriage imply?
3. Why is subjection to God's will essential to a return to the divine plan? What does it imply?
4. What does Pius XI say in this connection of the use of natural means? What of the use of the supernatural or grace?
5. Why is obedience to the Church necessary for an effective restoration of the divine plan with regard to marriage?
6. What does the encyclical say regarding the need for instruction on marriage?
7. What does Pius XI say regarding the need for a steadfast will on the part of husband and wife? What does he recommend toward its attainment?
8. What two types of preparation for marriage does the Supreme Pontiff mention?
9. What does Pius XI say regarding the choice of a life partner, and what specific recommendations does he make?

Families In Straited Circumstances

At this point in the encyclical Pius XI turns to a consideration of some special difficulties that the families of the poor ordinarily have to contend with and to remedies for them. The paragraphs that follow are among the most striking in the document and reveal the genuine concern of His Holiness for the poor. First of all he renews the teaching of Leo XIII regarding the living wage, warning also, however, that a reasonable thrift is expected of the unmarried. Then he speaks for aid to poor families through private or public guilds, for help on the part of the rich and for public assistance wherever private resources do not suffice. Where proper steps are not taken to help those in need, he points out, not only do the married loose heart but home life and the observance of God's commandments are rendered difficult and the very state is endangered. His own words read:

"Now since it is no rare thing to find that the perfect observance of God's commands and conjugal integrity encounter difficulties by reason of the fact that the man and wife are in straitened circumstances, their necessities must be relieved as far as possible.

"And so, in the first place, every effort must be made to bring about that which Our predecessor Leo XIII, of happy memory, has already insisted upon, namely, that in the State such economic and social methods should be adopted as will enable every head of a family to earn as much as, according to his station in life, is necessary for himself, his wife, and for the rearing of his children, for 'the labourer is worthy of his hire.' To deny this, or to make light of what is equitable, is a grave injustice and is placed among the greatest sins by Holy Writ; nor is it lawful to fix such a scanty wage as will be insufficient for the upkeep of the family in the circumstances in which it is placed.

"Care, however, must be taken that the parties themselves, for a considerable time before entering upon

married life, should strive to dispose of, or at least to diminish, the material obstacles in their way. The manner in which this may be done effectively and honestly must be pointed out by those who are experienced. Provision must be made also, in the case of those who are not self-supporting, for joint aid by private or public guilds.

“When these means which We have pointed out do not fulfill the needs, particularly of a larger or poorer family, Christian charity towards our neighbor absolutely demands that those things which are lacking to the needy should be provided; hence it is incumbent on the rich to help the poor, so that, having an abundance of this world’s goods, they may not expend them fruitlessly or completely squander them, but employ them for the support and well-being of those who lack the necessities of life. They who give of their substance to Christ in the person of His poor will receive from the Lord a most bountiful reward when He shall come to judge the world; they who act to the contrary will pay the penalty. Not in vain does the Apostle warn us: ‘He that hath the substance of this world and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him: how doth the charity of God abide in him?’

“If, however, for this purpose, private resources do not suffice, it is the duty of the public authority to supply for the insufficient forces of individual effort, particularly in a matter which is of such importance to the commonweal, touching as it does the maintenance of the family and married people. If families, particularly those in which there are many children, have not suitable dwellings; if the husband cannot find employment and means of livelihood; if the necessities of life cannot be purchased except at exorbitant prices; if even the mother of the family to the great harm of the home, is compelled to go forth and seek a living by her own labour; if she, too, in the ordinary or even extraordinary labours of childbirth, is deprived of proper food, medicine, and

the assistance of a skilled physician, it is patent to all to what an extent married people may lose heart, and how home life and the observance of God's commands are rendered difficult for them; indeed it is obvious how great a peril can arise to the public security and to the welfare and very life of civil society itself when such men are reduced to that condition of desperation that, having nothing which they fear to lose, they are emboldened to hope for chance advantage from the upheaval of the State and of established order.

"Wherefore, those who have the care of the State and of the public good cannot neglect the needs of married people and their families, without bringing great harm upon the State and on the common welfare. Hence, in making the laws and in disposing of public funds they must do their utmost to relieve the needs of the poor, considering such a task as one of the most important of their administrative duties."

Next follow a few words in which the Supreme Pontiff expresses regret that at times help is more bountifully extended to the unmarried than to married mothers. "We are sorry to note," he says, "that not infrequently nowadays it happens that through a certain inversion of the true order of things, ready and bountiful assistance is provided for the unmarried mother and her illegitimate offspring (who, of course must be helped in order to avoid a greater evil) which is denied to legitimate mothers or given sparingly or almost grudgingly."

The mention of private guilds by the encyclical suggests the thought of the so-called maternity guild found in a number of parishes in the United States. A word about it should be of interest. It consists of a group of individuals who bind themselves together on a parish basis to provide a fund for the purpose of defraying the expenses incidental to childbirth on the part of any of its members. The establishment of Maternity Guilds was prompted by the fact that many were unable to procure for themselves competent care at the time of con-

finement, or could meet the expenses involved only with the greatest difficulty. It was prompted, too, by the fact that the enemies of Christian wedlock were organized for its destruction; organized, in other words, to help those in wedded life by sinful means while no suitable organization was at hand to render financial assistance to those who are eager to observe the law of God. However, while the motive of financial help has been held of prime importance, it must not be the only one that should actuate its members. The promoters of the guild plan are eager that the organization will also serve to develop in Catholic parents a definite morale, that it will create in them a genuine pride in Christian parenthood and will fire them with a determination to stand shoulder to shoulder in opposition to modern degeneracy and in defense of the Catholic principles of wedded life.

PRESERVATION OF THE MORAL ORDER

Sufficient temporal goods are necessary for satisfactory family life. But certainly highly essential, too, is the preservation of the moral order. The State should help to make proper provision for both. If the moral order is weakened, both family and State will suffer. However, the preservation of the moral order depends on more than the temporal power, or the State; it also depends on a religious authority, the Church. Both Church and State have a part to play in this important field. Both should, therefore, work together. In fact it will not only be to the good of society but to their own advantage to do so. Such, in brief, are the last considerations to which the encyclical gives its attention. To quote its words:

“But not only in regard to temporal goods, Venerable Brethren, is it the concern of the public authority to make proper provision for matrimony and the family, but also in other things which concern the good of souls. Just laws must be made for the protection of chastity, for reciprocal conjugal aid, and for similar purposes, and these must be faithfully enforced, because, as history tes-

tifies, the prosperity of the State and the temporal happiness of its citizens cannot remain safe and sound where the foundation on which they are established, which is the moral order, is weakened and where the very fountainhead from which the State draws its life, namely, wedlock and the family, is obstructed by the vices of its citizens.

“For the preservation of the moral order neither the laws and sanctions of the temporal power are sufficient, nor is the beauty of virtue and the expending of its necessity. Religious authority must enter in to enlighten the mind, to direct the will, and to strengthen human frailty by the assistance of divine grace. Such an authority is found nowhere save in the Church instituted by Christ the Lord. Hence We earnestly exhort in the Lord all those who hold the reins of power that they establish and maintain firmly harmony and friendship with this Church of Christ so that through the united activity and energy of both powers the tremendous evils, fruits of those wanton liberties which assail both marriage and the family and are a menace to both Church and State, may be effectively frustrated.

“Governments can assist the Church greatly in the execution of its important office, if, in laying down their ordinances, they take account of what is prescribed by divine and ecclesiastical law, and if penalties are fixed for offenders. For as it is, there are those who think that whatever is permitted by the laws of the State, or at least is not punished by them, is allowed also in the moral order, and, because they neither fear God nor see any reason to fear the laws of man, they act even against their conscience, thus often bringing ruin upon themselves and upon many others. There will be no peril to or lessening of the rights and integrity of the State from its association with the Church. Such suspicion and fear is empty and groundless, as Leo XIII has already so clearly set forth: ‘It is generally agreed,’ he says, ‘that the Founder of the Church, Jesus Christ, wished the

spiritual power to be distinct from the civil, and each to be free and unhampered in doing its own work, not forgetting, however, that it is expedient to both, and in the interest of everybody, that there be a harmonious relationship . . . If the civil power combines in a friendly manner with the spiritual power of the Church, it necessarily follows that both parties will greatly benefit. The dignity of the State will be enhanced, and with religion as its guide, there will never be a rule that is not just; while for the Church there will be at hand a safeguard and defense which will operate to the public good of the faithful.' ”

Before concluding this consideration Pius XI points to the agreement made by the Holy See with Italy as an example of co-operation between Church and State that might be followed by other nations. He mentions specifically the agreement with regard to matrimony. His words are: “To bring forward a recent and clear example of what is meant, it has happened quite in consonance with right order and entirely according to the law of Christ, that in the solemn Convention happily entered into between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Italy, also in matrimonial affairs a peaceful settlement and friendly co-operation has been obtained, such as befitted the glorious history of the Italian people and its ancient and sacred traditions. These decrees, are to be found in the Lateran Pact: ‘The Italian State, desirous of restoring to the institution of matrimony, which is the basis of the family, that dignity conformable to the traditions of its people, assigns as civil effects of the sacrament of matrimony all that is attributed to it in Canon Law.’ To this fundamental norm are added further clauses in the common pact.

“This might well be a striking example to all of how, even in this our own day (in which, sad to say, the absolute separation of the civil power from the Church, and indeed from every religion, is so often taught), the one supreme authority can be united and associated with

the other without detriment to the rights and supreme power of either, thus protecting Christian parents from pernicious evils and menacing ruin."

Finally, there is a concluding exhortation by the Holy Father. To state it in his own words:

"All these things which, Venerable Brethren, prompted by Our past solicitude We put before you, We wish according to the norm of Christian prudence to be promulgated widely among all Our beloved Children committed to your care as members of the great family of Christ, that all may be thoroughly acquainted with sound teaching concerning marriage, so that they may be ever on their guard against the dangers advocated by the teachers of error, and most of all, that 'denying ungodliness and worldly desires, they may live soberly and justly, and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and Our Saviour Jesus Christ.'

"May the Father, 'of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named,' Who strengthens the weak and gives courage to the pusillanimous and fainthearted; and Christ Our Lord and Redeemer, 'the Institutor and Perfecter of the holy sacraments,' Who desired marriage to be and made it the mystical image of His own ineffable union with the Church; and the Holy Ghost, Lord of God, the Light of hearts and the Strength of the mind, grant that all will perceive, will admit with a ready will, and by the grace of God will put into practice, what We by this letter have expounded concerning the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony, the wonderful law and will of God respecting it, the errors and impending dangers, and the remedies with which they can be counteracted, so that that fruitfulness dedicated to God will flourish again vigorously in Christian wedlock.

"We most humbly pour forth Our earnest prayer at the Throne of His Grace, that God, the Author of all graces, the inspirer of all good desires and deeds, may bring this about, and deign to give it bountifully accord-

ing to the greatness of His liberality and omnipotence, and as a token of the abundant blessing of the same Omnipotent God, We most lovingly grant to you, Venerable Brethren, and to the clergy and people committed to your watchful care, the Apostolic Benediction."

Study Club Questions

1. In what particular ways does the encyclical say those in straitened circumstances should be helped?
2. Under what particular circumstances, according to the encyclical, should the State come to the assistance of needy families?
3. What is a maternity guild?
4. What does the Pope say regarding co-operation between Church and State?
5. To what example of a harmonious relation between Church and State does the encyclical refer?





University of
Connecticut
Libraries



39153029294230

